
Modern Foreign Languages

July 2016



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Introduction

This report is published in response to a request for advice in the Minister's annual remit letter 2015-2016 to Estyn. The report focuses on the quality of teaching and learning in modern foreign languages, and developments and issues in modern foreign language teaching in Wales since our last report published in 2009.

This report is intended for the Welsh Government, governors, headteachers, senior leaders and modern foreign language staff in schools, local authorities and the regional consortia. It may be of interest to parents, to staff in other sectors, and to agencies who work with schools to improve the quality of learning, teaching and leadership. This report draws on the evidence noted in Appendix 1. The evidence includes the view of learners and the outcomes of a questionnaire that gathered the views of parents.

Background

In June 2009, Estyn published a review of modern foreign languages: 'Improving modern foreign languages in secondary schools in Wales: Advice and guidance on good practice for schools and local authorities.'

The schools included in the 2009 survey were those we identified as having good or better practice. For the purposes of this survey, inspectors identified a more varied sample of schools, including both those that show good practice and those facing difficulties in maintaining or attracting pupils to take a modern foreign language to examination level.

The key findings in 2009 were:

- 1) There had been a steady increase over recent years in the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 or above in modern foreign languages at the end of key stage 3
- 2) Learners who studied modern foreign languages in key stage 4 got good results in terms of the proportion of learners who gained a C grade or above at GCSE
- 3) Results at A level were also good in terms of the proportion of learners who gained a grade A* - C or above at A level
- 4) Standards of achievement, as judged by Estyn school inspectors, were generally good, and similar to those in other subjects
- 5) In the schools visited specifically for the survey, standards were much higher than was usually the case on other inspections
- 6) The quality of teaching was a very important factor in developing good standards and in encouraging pupils to continue with learning a modern foreign language at the end of both key stages
- 7) As well as good teaching, departments with high numbers of learners taking modern foreign languages in key stage 4 usually had effective strategies to promote further language study

- 8) Many of the successful schools in the survey provided at least two hours a week of modern foreign language study in key stage 3
- 9) School option systems had a strong influence on the proportion of learners choosing to study modern foreign languages in key stage 4
- 10) Those modern foreign language departments judged to be good organised a wide variety of extra-curricular activities linked to the subject
- 11) There was too little collaboration between English, Welsh and modern foreign language departments in schools
- 12) Foreign language learning in primary schools had a positive effect on pupils' attitudes and achievements in secondary schools
- 13) The support from local authorities for modern foreign languages varied too much
- 14) The overall number of students applying for initial teacher training places in modern foreign languages had remained fairly stable over the previous four years, but providers had experienced fluctuations and had had difficulty in meeting their quotas

In June 2015, the Centre for British Teachers (CfBT) Education Trust published its findings from the language trends survey carried out in 2014-2015 (Board and Tinsley, 2015) on behalf of the British Council in Wales. This survey pointed to a decline in the uptake of modern foreign languages in key stage 4 and in post-16 courses. It also pointed out a decline in the number of learners taking modern foreign language examinations at GCSE and A level or their equivalents.

Wales is not alone in seeing a decline in modern foreign language uptake. This issue is common to the other home nations. In October 2015, the Minister for Education and Skills in Wales published 'Global Futures: a plan to improve and promote modern foreign languages in Wales in 2015-2020' (Welsh Government, 2015a). This plan links closely to the outcomes of Professor Graham Donaldson's review of curriculum and assessment arrangements in Wales, 'Successful Futures', (Donaldson, 2015). A key recommendation within 'Successful Futures', and accepted by the Minister, is to bring English, Welsh and modern foreign languages into one area of learning and experience, called 'Language, Literacy and Communication'.

'Global Futures' sets out the intention that 'all learners in Wales become global citizens, able to communicate effectively in other languages and to appreciate other cultures,' (Welsh Government, 2015a, pg.3). In order to achieve this, the plan proposes 'to encourage learners to extend their knowledge of other cultures by becoming 'bilingual plus 1'; that is, studying English, Welsh and at least one other modern foreign language from primary to examination level, (pg. 3)'.

The aims of the strategy are:

- 1) to increase the number of young people choosing to study modern foreign language subjects at level 2 (GCSE or equivalent), at A level (level 3 or equivalent) and at higher education level
- 2) to improve the teaching and learning experience of modern foreign languages for learners aged 7-19, with the intention of working towards a 'bilingual plus 1' system where formal teaching of modern foreign languages will begin in Year 5

as part of the Language, Literacy and Communication area of learning and experience

- 3) to maintain and improve the attainment levels presently being achieved in modern foreign language subjects, (pg. 3)

The then Minister for Education and Skills envisaged a five-year plan linking 'Global Futures' with other education policies set out in 'Qualified for Life' (Welsh Government, 2014) and 'Successful Futures' (Donaldson, 2015). In order to achieve the intended outcomes, the Minister tasked the regional consortia with developing the support needed for modern foreign language teachers to bring about the required strategic improvements. He also set up a steering group to oversee the plan's implementation and to monitor and evaluate the impact of the work of the regional consortia and the schools acting as centres of excellence and lead schools for the subject.

Until the end of the summer term 2015, most modern foreign language teachers acquired useful professional development from working in informal groups with colleagues locally or in language groups across local authorities to develop new ideas. Many worked with CILT Cymru, The National Centre for Languages. These activities had a positive impact on the quality of their teaching.

From September 2015, the Welsh Government tasked the regional consortia to deliver the new vision and strategies for modern foreign language teaching in Wales as set out in 'Global Futures'. This includes:

- undertaking a comprehensive audit of the schools in their region to identify the pattern of modern foreign language learning provision
- providing appropriate support to the schools identified in the audit to improve the numbers of learners taking language qualifications and to improve the quality of teaching and learning
- developing clear action plans to include intended outcomes and success criteria against which to monitor, track and report on the impact of projects initiated to support modern foreign language departments in relation to the strategic plan set out in 'Global Futures'.

It is too early to comment on the impact of the strategy in this report.

Main findings

Key stage 3

- 1 In the lessons observed in key stage 3, most pupils achieve good skills in their oral work and in their reading and writing in the assessed language. Many show a good understanding of the grammar of the assessed language. This is a significant improvement when compared with Estyn's findings about learners' understanding of grammar in 2009.
- 2 However, too many learners make repeated mistakes with intonation and pronunciation, particularly when reading aloud, or they prepare conversations in written form before practising them as spoken conversations. This detracts from their ability to speak the language fluently.
- 3 The percentage of learners achieving the expected level (level 5) or above in modern foreign languages has improved over the last seven years, but it is still too low (84%), (Welsh Government, 2015b). It is the second-lowest level of performance in the National Curriculum subjects. Boys generally perform worse than girls in modern foreign languages.

Key stage 4

- 4 In the lessons observed in key stage 4, learners generally have a good understanding of the language skills they require for examinations. Most learners make effective use of technology to support their language learning.
- 5 However, too many learners, even the more able, do not speak the language fluently enough. Often this results from learners preparing for spoken examination by writing out and learning by heart written paragraphs on the prescribed topics.
- 6 Examination outcomes for those who take modern foreign language GCSEs are good, (Welsh Government, 2015d). The proportion of GCSE entries into modern foreign languages achieving grades A*-C was 77% in 2015. This was better than in most other National Curriculum subjects (Welsh Government, 2015c).
- 7 However, of those learners who achieved the expected level in modern foreign languages at key stage 3, only 28.2% went on to enter at least one modern foreign language GCSE, (Welsh Government, 2015c). At GCSE, boys continue to perform less well than girls in modern foreign languages (Welsh Government, 2015e).

A level

- 8 A level results are good in modern foreign languages and compare well with those in other subjects, (Welsh Government, 2015d). In 2015, the proportion of A level entries in modern foreign languages gaining grades A*-C was 82%, (Welsh Government, 2015c). The trend of high performance at A level has persisted over time.

- 9 However, the decline in entries at A level is greater than at GCSE, (Welsh Government, 2015f). The number of boys taking an A level in modern foreign languages is a much smaller proportion than the number of girls, and the proportion has stayed at a similar level over time. In 2015, only 204 of the 700 entries in modern foreign language at A level were boys (29%). Since 2009 this proportion has shown small fluctuations, but has generally stayed at just under a third (Welsh Government, not published).

Teaching

- 10 The quality of teaching in many modern foreign language classrooms is adequate. In a few cases it is good and in a very few cases it is excellent.
- 11 Most teachers in the lessons observed are subject specialists with appropriate qualifications to teach modern foreign languages. They speak the languages they teach with a good degree of fluency and accuracy. A few teachers do not have a firm enough grasp of the most effective way to teach a modern foreign language. In most of these cases it is usually because they are teaching the modern foreign language as a second subject.
- 12 Increasingly, teachers are using developments in digital technology in lessons to good effect. In a few cases, teachers are using technology well to support homework tasks.
- 13 The extent to which teachers teach through the assessed language has declined. Too often teachers use English to explain simple classroom instructions.
- 14 In many less effective lessons, teachers allow teaching grammar to dominate at the expense of learners developing the key modern foreign language skills of speaking and listening.
- 15 In too many classrooms, teachers require pupils to prepare conversations in written form before practising the spoken language. This hinders pupils from developing a good level of fluency in the assessed language.
- 16 Most teachers mark and assess learners' work effectively on a regular basis. However, the effective use of assessment for learning techniques has declined since Estyn's last report in 2009.

Provision, leadership and management

- 17 Most heads of department and modern foreign language teams share a vision of the modern foreign language provision they wish to offer. However, increasingly, many do not support this through a written policy that sets out a shared vision for modern foreign languages teaching and learning within the school. This leads to varied practice within the department.
- 18 On average, learners experience three hours of modern foreign language learning across a two-week timetable. However, this is less time than the two hours per week recommended in Estyn's last modern foreign language report.

- 19 Nearly all departments have a well-planned modern foreign language curriculum that links well to National Curriculum level descriptors for the four skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing).
- 20 However, only in a very few departments do teachers plan in effective ways to prepare learners to use the assessed language in everyday transactions in the classroom.
- 21 In nearly all departments, there were a good range of resources to support modern foreign language learning. Many modern foreign language teachers run effective extra-curricular activities for helping to encourage young people to take a modern foreign language to examination level.
- 22 The examinations that learners take in modern foreign languages are mainly at GCSE or A level. A few schools use other examinations to accommodate learners who may have stronger skills in speaking, listening and reading, but with less emphasis on writing. At present, there is no GCSE that links language learning and business skills. Many teachers regard this as a significant gap, especially in attracting pupils of a wider range of ability to study a modern foreign language in key stage 4.
- 23 Most headteachers and senior leaders are supportive of learners having the opportunity to learn at least one modern foreign language to examination level. However, nearly all report that this is challenging, due to the dominance of the core subjects at key stage 4.
- 24 The structure of option choices at the end of key stage 3 often means that learners do not study a modern foreign language because the subject was in an option column with another subject that they particularly wanted to study. As a result, there are a small number of schools in Wales where learners do not study a modern foreign language at key stage 4.

Recruitment of modern foreign language teachers

- 25 Headteachers with modern foreign language departments with few or no learners in key stage 4 and post-16, and headteachers in the west of Wales, report that it is often difficult to recruit teachers for modern foreign language departments.
- 26 Quite often, the linguists applying for posts in schools with little provision for modern foreign languages are only able to offer one modern foreign language. This reduces flexibility on the timetable and in the number of options available to learners.
- 27 In 2014-2015, initial teacher training centres recruited at most half of the quota for modern foreign language trainees allocated to them by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

Recommendations

Teachers of modern foreign languages should:

- R1 Improve the quality of teaching in modern foreign languages by ensuring that they:
- increase the use of the assessed language as the language of instruction across key stage 3, key stage 4 and post-16
 - help learners to gain a secure grasp of the rules of pronunciation of the language they are learning
 - help learners to use an extensive range of strategies to prepare confidently for oral examinations, so that learners develop oral fluency at levels in line with their abilities
 - make sure that learners of all abilities are fully challenged and engage in creative language activities that develop their mastery of the language
 - keep an appropriate balance between the teaching of grammar and the four language skills, particularly speaking and listening
 - assess learners' work using meaningful assessment for learning strategies
- R2 Attend and engage with regional network groups and regional training to develop high-order skills in modern foreign language teaching and learning

Headteachers and senior leaders should:

- R3 Improve learners' uptake of at least one modern foreign language at examination level through reviewing their curriculum planning and timetabling arrangements
- R4 Make sure that their modern foreign language teachers are able to take advantage of the 'Global Futures' continuing professional development offered within and across regions to improve the quality of learning and teaching of modern foreign languages

How well do learners achieve?

- 28 In the lessons observed in key stage 3, most learners have a good knowledge of basic vocabulary in the modern foreign language they study. In many schools, learners take part in fun activities, such as spelling bees, to help them learn the meaning, spelling and pronunciation of words. Many learners learn the alphabet in the language they are studying (the assessed language) and they are able to spell vocabulary competently using the alphabet appropriate for that language.
- 29 The majority of learners pronounce words correctly and they can speak in simple sentences with good intonation and accent. However, a significant minority of learners make repeated mistakes with pronunciation and intonation. This is particularly the case in French because learners do not always have enough knowledge about how the sound system of the language works.
- 30 More able learners can often use more complex language and ask questions in a range of ways. They express a wider range of ideas, including providing reasons and opinions about the topic under discussion. Less able learners express their ideas in simple sentences. However, when they have appropriate support materials and guidance, they can expand their answers appropriately.
- 31 Most learners have good listening skills and they understand simple conversations and stories in the assessed language. Most more able learners develop good strategies to help them understand more complex listening activities, such as listening for key words and for words that are similar in English, to ensure that they understand the topic. In most cases, less able learners are able to pick out the key points from a listening activity with help from prompt cards and other materials.
- 32 Most learners engage willingly in paired activities to practise their listening and speaking skills. However, learners too often prepare conversations in written form before practising them as spoken conversations. This practice is not helpful in acquiring fluency in the language and is a significant weakness. More able learners show good ability at an early stage of their learning to use a range of different question forms with appropriate intonation and they rely less on preparing conversations in written form before speaking.
- 33 Many learners in key stage 3 show a good understanding of a range of texts they read. They can answer simple questions verbally and in writing with reasonable accuracy in the assessed language. When teachers ask open questions and help learners to structure their responses by providing a model beforehand, many learners can answer questions in greater detail. Overall, most more able learners provide extended responses to more complex questions and can express their reasons, ideas and opinions with fluency.
- 34 However, although most learners can read and understand texts relative to their stage of learning well, many learners of French in particular fail to read the text aloud with a secure grasp of written language rules. For example, learners will often sound 's', 't' or the silent 'h' when it is not appropriate to do so. This is a significant weakness.

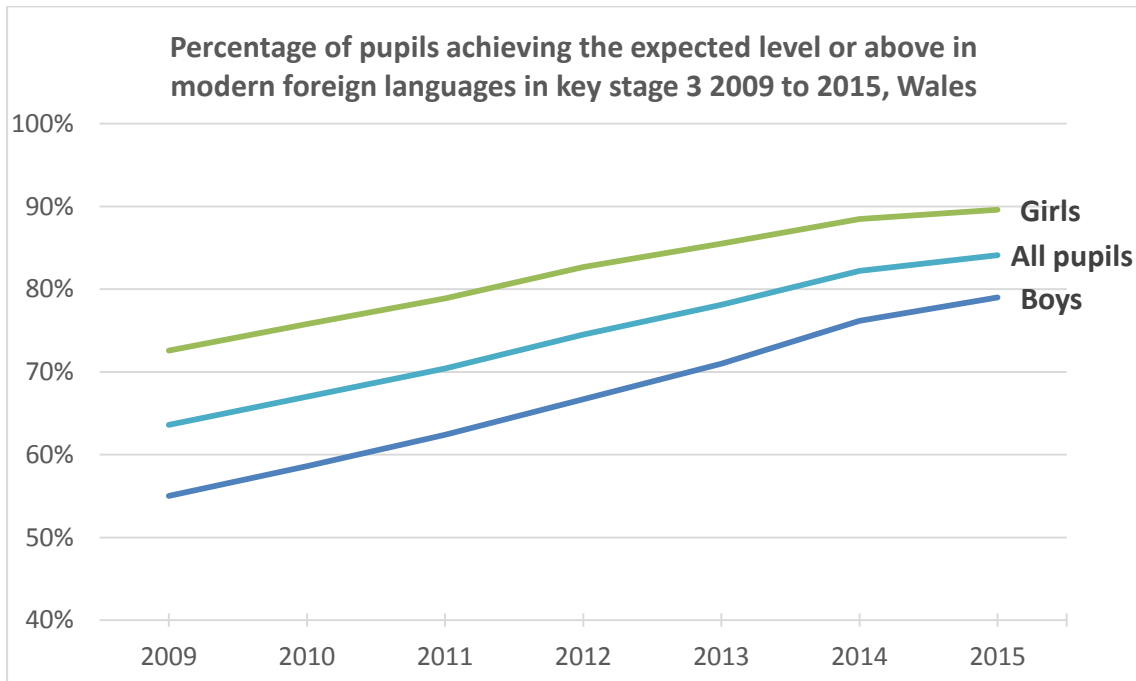
- 35 Most learners are able to write accurate simple sentences and paragraphs in the assessed language using a good range of vocabulary, tenses and structures, particularly when they are taught the process of drafting, sharing their work for comment and re-drafting. Most learners use dictionaries in the assessed language effectively to support their writing and to vary and extend their vocabulary. Many learners have a good understanding of how to choose the language they use according to what and for whom they are writing. They are able to write short pieces in a number of genres, for example descriptive pieces, letters to friends, reports of incidents, dialogues and presentations.
- 36 Many learners show a good understanding of the grammar of the assessed language. More able learners often use more complex sentences and a greater range of vocabulary, tenses and structures well to structure their work in paragraphs so that it has an effective and logical structure and is more interesting to read. This is a significant improvement when compared with Estyn's findings about learners' understanding of grammar in 2009.
- 37 In the lessons observed in key stage 4, overall learners have a good understanding of the skills they need to master for examinations. In most cases, learners engage well with the learning materials and their peers to practise the four skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing separately and in mixed-skill activities. Learners show generally good skills in independent learning, such as researching topics, using authentic source materials and the internet to practise their language skills and to develop their knowledge further. Most learners in key stage 4 generally show a good level of perseverance in uncovering the meaning of unfamiliar language. Many learners show a sound command of vocabulary and key grammatical structures and they apply them satisfactorily in a range of different activities.
- 38 More able pupils often show a very secure command of basic vocabulary and structures and an increasingly good command of more demanding structures, such as the appropriate use of the conditional and subjunctive tenses, and active and passive voices. Many learners are able to cope with hearing and reading longer and more complex texts. A minority of more able learners show good understanding of the power of language and the use of nuances in their writing and speech. They begin to use language to very good effect and, in particular, they start to bring more 'flavour' to their own work in speaking and writing.
- 39 Most learners in key stage 4 make effective use of technology to support their language learning, for example to practise particular aspects of the language or to tune into foreign radio and social media. Most learners find that fully understanding radio items or watching television at this stage of their learning is a challenge. Nonetheless, it is effective in exposing them to the assessed language at the speed used by native speakers and to the most up-to-date expressions and slang words.
- 40 However, a common shortcoming for learners across the ability range is when they prepare for the spoken examination by writing out and learning by heart written paragraphs on the prescribed topics. This hinders their ability to speak the language with a good degree of fluency and it can be detrimental to examination outcomes if the examiner does not ask the question for which they have prepared an answer. This is a significant shortcoming. In more effective practice, learners use mind maps to prompt key ideas, structures and vocabulary, for example.

- 41 In the lessons seen in both key stage 3 and key stage 4, most learners have a good understanding of their strengths and the areas in which they need to improve. In many cases, they use assessment for learning targets diligently to improve their own work and to provide well-focused feedback to their peers.

How well do learners attain?

Performance in teacher assessments at the end of key stage 3

- 42 In 2015, the percentage of learners achieving the expected level (level 5) or above at key stage 3 in teacher assessments in modern foreign languages was 84%. This represents an increase of over 20 percentage points since 2009. This steady increase in attainment over the last six years has been greater than the increase in any other National Curriculum subject, except for Welsh second language. However, despite this improvement, the percentage of learners attaining level 5 or above remains lower than in all other subjects, except Welsh second language, (Welsh Government, 2015b).
- 43 The gap in attainment at key stage 3 in 2015 between boys and girls is 10.6 percentage points. This is much lower than in 2009 when it was 17.6 percentage points. Despite this improvement, boys generally attain less well in modern foreign languages than in all other subjects at key stage 3, and less well than in English, (Welsh Government, 2015g).

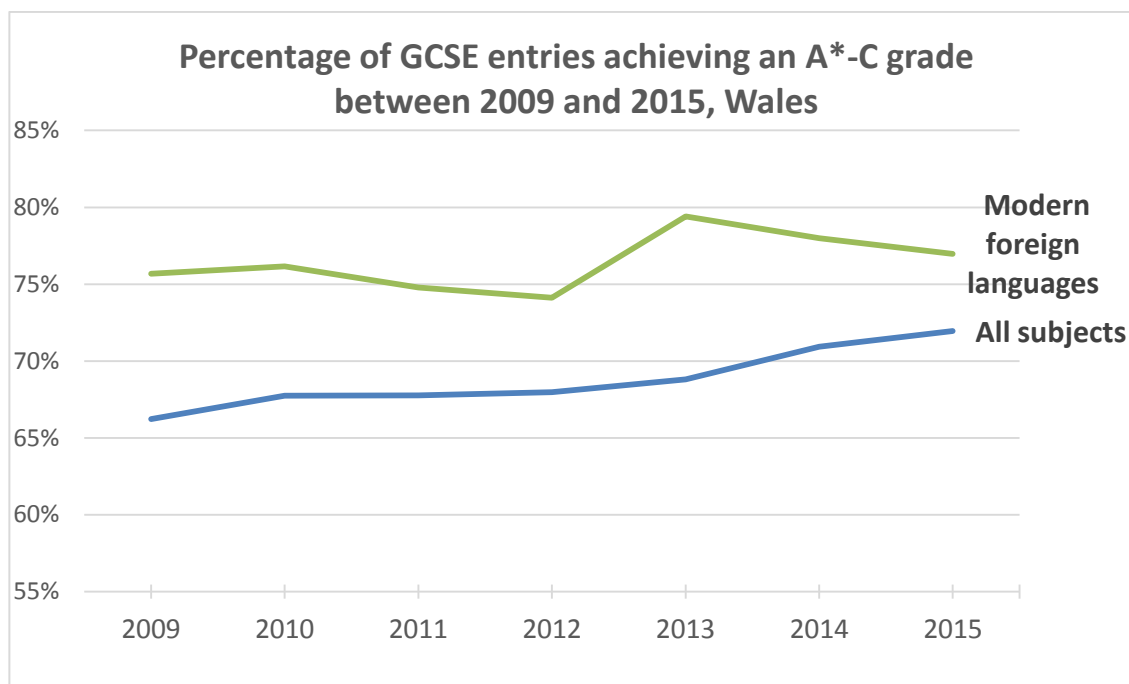


Source: Welsh Government (2015e)

- 44 A recent survey by the British Council, Wales (Board and Tinsley, 2015) noted that 29% of schools reported that pupils or groups of pupils do not study a modern foreign language as a result of English and mathematics being given a higher priority.

Examination performance at the end of key stage 4

- 45 Results in modern foreign language GCSEs are good or better than for most other National Curriculum subjects. The proportion of GCSE entries resulting in grades A*-C has fluctuated slightly between 2009 and 2015 but has generally remained around the 77% recorded in 2015. This is better than in most other National Curriculum subjects. In 2015, it is five percentage points above the average for all subjects, including vocational subjects, (Welsh Government, 2015c).



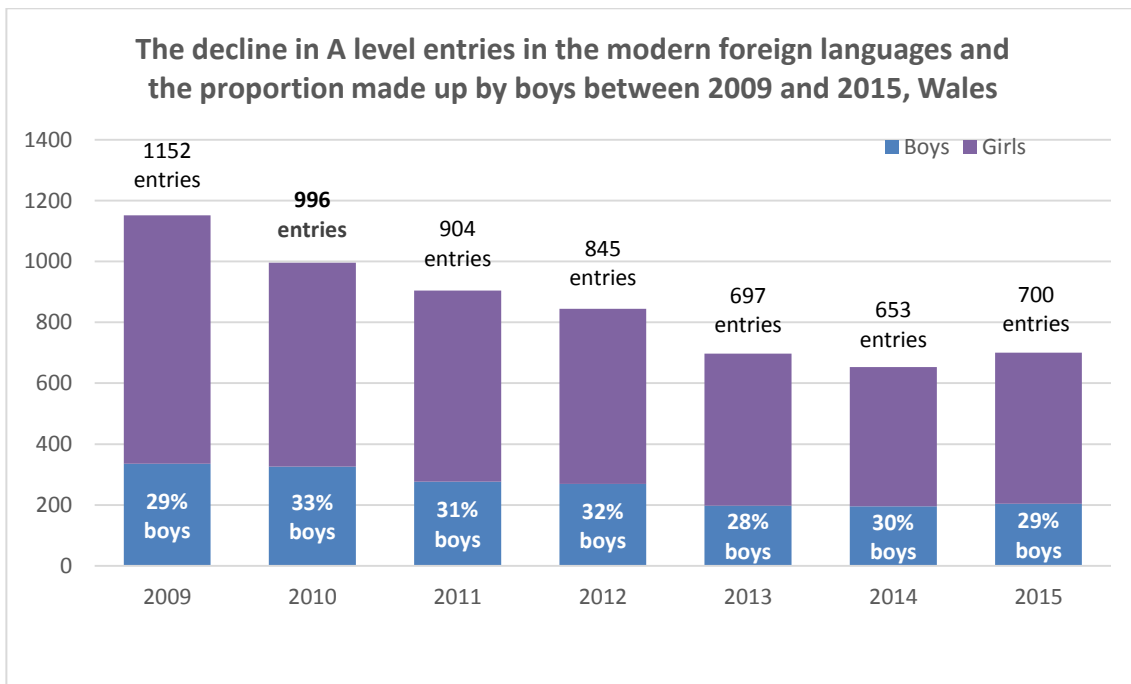
Note: Includes 15-year-olds only. Early entry and discounted exams have been removed. Modern Foreign Languages includes French, German and Spanish, as well as other languages such as Arabic, Chinese and Italian.

Source: Welsh Government (2015e)

- 46 The number of learners entering GCSE examinations in modern foreign languages is small, but successful. However, figures are not available to show how many of those who attain A* and A grades are native speakers of the language and this may have an important influence on outcomes and the relatively high performance compared with that in other subjects, (Welsh Government, 2015d).
- 47 Between 2009 and 2015, the gap in attainment at GCSE between boys and girls has stayed around eight or nine percentage points. The gap of nine percentage points in 2015 is much less than the gap in English language (17 percentage points), but higher than the gap in mathematics (one percentage point). Overall, the average gap in attainment between boys and girls across all GCSEs was nine percentage points, (Welsh Government, 2015e).
- 48 The proportion of GCSE modern foreign language entries accounted for by boys has remained relatively steady. Boys make up 38% of all entries in 2015 when compared to 39% in 2009, (Welsh Government, 2015e).
- 49 The number of schools with pupils entering more than one modern foreign language at key stage 4 has declined since 2010. The proportion of schools entering pupils for more than one modern foreign language at GCSE fell from 66% in 2010 to 56% in 2015, (Welsh Government, 2015c).

Examination performance at A level

- 50 A level results are good. They are as good or better overall than for most mainstream subjects. In 2015, the proportion of A level entries in modern foreign languages gaining grades A*-C remained stable at 82%. This is six percentage points higher than the average A*-C score for all subjects combined and is similar to the position in 2009, (Welsh Government, 2015c).
- 51 Entries to A level in modern foreign languages have declined more sharply than the number of pupils entering GCSE in modern foreign languages. In 2009, there were 1,152 entries in A level in modern foreign languages; this figure fell by over a third (39%) to 700 entries in 2015, (Welsh Government, 2015f).



Note: Includes 17-year-olds only. Early entry and discounted exams have been removed. Modern Foreign Languages includes French, German and Spanish, as well as other languages such as Arabic, Chinese and Italian.

Source: Welsh Government (2015f)

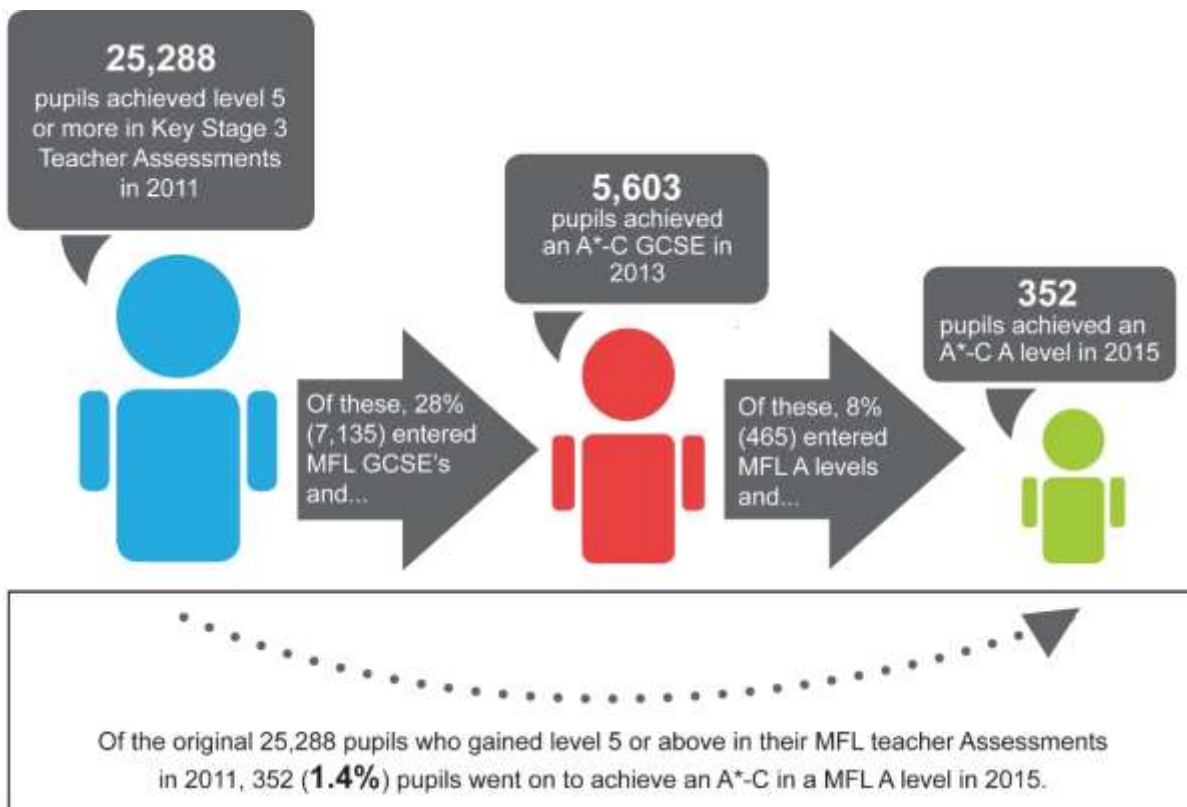
- 52 The decline in entries seen by all pupils is consistent when split by gender; entries by both boys and girls have declined by 39%. In similarity to the other key stages, at A level considerably fewer entries are taken by boys than by girls. Since 2009, the proportions have stayed fairly steady at around 30% boys and 70% girls. The proportion of boys entering all A levels is 43%.
- 53 There are further gender differences in the types of languages entered at A level. In 2015, 24% of entries by girls were for Spanish compared to 16% of entries by boys. In contrast, boys were more likely to be studying an 'other modern foreign language', with these less common exams making up 19% of all boys' entries compared to 11% of girls'.
- 54 The popularity in terms of entry numbers of A levels in languages other than French, German and Spanish has remained steady from 2009 to 2015. However, due to the decline in entries for French, German and Spanish, entries for A level in other

modern foreign languages now make up 13% of all entries compared to 6% in 2009. In 2015, at 50%, entries for French remain higher than for any other language. However, as with GCSE entries, it has declined in popularity since 2009 when French made up 61% of all A level language entries. The proportion of entries for German has shown a similar decline and at 15% is lower than the proportion of entries for Spanish, which has risen to 21%. Overall, however, in 2015 the number of 17-year-olds in Wales who attempted A level languages in Spanish is 150 entrants and just over 100 entrants in German, (Welsh Government, 2015f).

Progression from key stage 3 to key stage 5

- 55 Of the number of learners who achieved the expected level (level 5) or above in modern foreign languages at the end of key stage 3 in 2011, 28.2% went on to enter at least one modern foreign language GCSE in 2013. Of the learners who achieved grades A*-C in at least one GCSE in modern foreign languages in 2013, 8.3% went on to enter for at least one A level in modern foreign languages in 2015. This represents less than 2% of the original cohort in 2010. Of this original cohort, 1.4% of entrants achieved a grade A*-C at A level in modern foreign languages, (Welsh Government, 2015c).

Progression of pupils entering modern foreign languages (MFL) in key stage 3 through GCSEs and A levels, 2011 to 2015, Wales



Source: Welsh Government (2015c) and (2015h)

The quality of teaching

- 56 Most teachers in the lessons observed are subject specialists with appropriate qualifications to teach modern foreign languages. They speak the languages they teach with a good degree of fluency and accuracy. A few teachers do not have as good a grasp of the most effective ways to teach a modern foreign language as needed. For example, while these teachers may plan a lesson that is well sequenced, in practice they do not always fully develop the skill that underpins the next exercise. This means that learners do not always have a secure grasp of the basic material and therefore cannot take the next step in consolidating their learning confidently. The disconnect between planning and application is usually because these teachers are teaching a modern foreign language as a second subject. However, overall, teachers plan modern foreign language lessons well and take appropriate account of the four language learning skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing.
- 57 In a minority of the most effective lessons, teachers plan well a series of sequenced activities that allow learners to revise previously learned language and structures as well as practising new language in a range of forms. They build learners' knowledge and fluency steadily through a sequence of activities, exposing learners to the language topic through the four discrete skills and in mixed-skill forms. They provide learners with good opportunities to consolidate and extend their language learning through a range of tasks that engage, motivate and challenge learners through independent and pair working, research and problem-solving, and that develop learners' knowledge of other subjects (for example, finance, health, politics, environment) and the wider world. There is a purposeful pace to the lesson. There are frequent opportunities for learners to use higher-order linguistic and problem-solving skills to produce work in which they use language creatively (see Appendix 3: case study 3).
- 58 In many less successful lessons, the pace of the lesson is slow and learners spend too much time engaged solely on reading and writing, or on tasks that do not challenge and extend their language learning. Too often, teachers ask pupils to write out conversations before practising as the spoken word. This hinders learners' abilities to think in and speak the language with a degree of fluency. Teachers' planning too often states that 'all' will complete a common task, then 'most' will complete a further task and 'some' will complete another task, the last ostensibly aimed at extending the most able. However, the task set for 'some' is too often not particularly challenging. In most cases, it seeks to consolidate the language they have learned, but does not help to develop learners' fluent and creative use of language.
- 59 In the few classes where differentiation is far stronger, teachers plan core, progression and challenge activities. All learners must complete the core exercise that introduces new language and skills. The progression activities invite learners to consolidate their knowledge of the new language and skills in activities that also recycle language, structures and skills learned in other topics. The activities encourage learners to express themselves as fully as they can. The challenge activities invite learners to use all the language they have learned in a creative and

open-ended activity, such as writing a story, a report, a play, a radio broadcast, a comic, a newspaper article or a blog, putting together and filming an oral presentation on a related topic, or writing in response to a picture/music stimulus. These approaches help pupils to use their imagination and develop their own expression in the language they are learning. (See Appendix 3: case study 4; and Appendix 4: stages of teaching and learning in mastering a modern foreign language.)

- 60 In less effective lessons, too often teachers do not spend enough time ensuring that learners can pronounce words correctly. They do not correct poor pronunciation systematically enough or actively teach learners how to relate the sounds of the language to the written word. This results in a minority of learners not being able to read the language aloud without making basic mistakes. It also results in learners lacking the confidence to speak the language and causes them to perpetuate mistakes. In these classes, teachers do not leave enough time to explain to learners the strategies for learning a language so that learners feel secure in sounding words, and they do not give learners enough time to practise and consolidate the language through repetition, pair or group activity.
- 61 Since the publication of Estyn's 2009 report on modern foreign languages, the extent to which teachers teach systematically through the assessed language has diminished. Too often teachers use English to explain simple classroom instructions. This lessens the opportunities that learners have to hear and respond to the target language.
- 62 Where teachers mostly use the assessed language, they ensure that they do so systematically throughout the year groups that they teach, with simplified language in the early years and building through to more complex language in the later year groups. The teachers who use the assessed language as the medium of tuition most effectively ensure that they actively teach the functional language that learners need from the beginning of learners' language learning. Where teachers introduce this practice at a later stage (for example in Year 10), it is generally less successful as learners are not used to it.
- 63 Following the introduction of the literacy and numeracy framework, most modern foreign language departments contribute well to helping learners in developing their understanding of grammar. Since Estyn's last report on modern foreign languages in 2009, most departments have worked effectively with the English and/or Welsh departments to ensure that they use the same grammatical terms. This enables learners to understand how languages work and what they have in common. Many departments have worked effectively with The National Centre for Languages (CILT, Cymru) on Triple Literacy projects that interest and challenge learners, as well as helping them to make connections between the language structures. These are well documented and provide effective case studies for other schools. This is a significant improvement.
- 64 However, in many less effective lessons, teachers allow teaching grammar to dominate the language lesson too much at the expense of learners developing the key modern foreign language skills of speaking and listening. Too much of these lessons is taken up with writing grammatical exercises. This often means that the lesson loses its vibrancy and learners lose interest. Too often, there is too much of a

'backwash effect' from the demands of examinations, where examination demands dictate many of the activities that learners undertake in key stage 3. In more effective lessons, teachers ensure a good balance of skills development with lively activities that help learners to learn the grammar through both direct teaching and pupils' direct experience of the language using the four skills.

- 65 Increasingly, teachers are using digital technology effectively in lessons to good effect. (See Appendix 3: case study 1). In the minority of schools with very good information and communication technology, the use of electronic tablets to carry out some whole-class activities improves learners' motivation and helps to ensure a brisk pace to learning. For example, subject-specific software enables the teacher to prepare a quiz based on a topic and the language and grammar being learned. (See Appendix 3: case study 2). This helps to cut down on teachers' preparation time as they can store, use and modify the material as needed and share it with other staff in a very short time. Activities where learners carry out short quizzes to test their knowledge and receive immediate feedback raise nearly all learners' participation levels in the lesson. The combined effect of using technology and the competition element of a quiz engages boys particularly well.
- 66 In a few cases, teachers use digital technology well to support homework tasks. Teachers have tended to move away from setting homework on a weekly basis and now set a half-termly task instead. This is a good idea as it provides an opportunity to consolidate aspects of the four different skills. One method used that has been successful is when learners can access electronic files on the school's network. They can then practise vocabulary and structures, prepare a conversation and make an oral presentation, as well as writing and producing podcasts. It also engages parents in the learner's language learning experience, as the parent can practise the language themselves and test the learner verbally on their vocabulary and pronunciation. This has the good effect of interesting and developing the parent's understanding of learning a language.

Assessment

- 67 Overall, most teachers keep up-to-date records of learners' progress well, and mark and standardise learners' work effectively. However, in many cases, teachers do not help learners to assess their own learning well enough.
- 68 Most teachers assess learners' work regularly. In many cases, they adapt the school's marking policy to support the use of the assessed language and ensure that learners understand key phrases. In most instances, teachers ensure that pupils have clear targets linked appropriately to National Curriculum descriptors. The majority of teachers highlight mistakes in written work and put aside time in lessons to go over common mistakes with the whole class. In many cases, they expect learners to revisit their written work and correct mistakes. However, they do not always carry out a second check to ensure that learners have responded appropriately.

- 69 Most teachers keep good records of learners' progress and they moderate and standardise learners' work regularly with other members of the department. In a few cases, teachers work with teachers from other schools to compare and standardise learners' outcomes. This has the benefit of assuring teachers that they are making appropriate judgements about the level of learners' work.
- 70 However, in too many classrooms, teachers do not use techniques that help learners to assess their own learning effectively enough in respect of speaking, listening and reading activities. While teachers will often use mechanisms, such as thumbs up/thumbs down, to assess learners' response to activities, they do not often unpack learners' self-assessment in any detail that is meaningful or influences the teaching or direction of the lesson afterwards. The regular use of assessment for learning techniques has declined since Estyn last reported in 2009.

The learning environment

- 71 In nearly all of the schools visited, the modern foreign language department is located in classrooms within close proximity to each other, and in a few cases close to the English and Welsh departments. In a very few cases, there are appropriate spaces just outside the classroom where pupils can go to prepare work in pairs and groups. In more modern buildings, a few staff teams also have the benefit of a small departmental staff room where they can meet and work together. These types of arrangements are helpful in allowing staff to work together more effectively and to develop a clear departmental ethos and shared approaches to teaching and learning.
- 72 Most of the modern foreign languages classrooms seen are spacious and allow for varied arrangements of tables and groups of learners. However, in many of the classrooms seen, the space is not used well and in most lessons tables are organised in rows. While this arrangement supports learners working in pairs relatively easily, it hinders effective group work in language learning.
- 73 In nearly all classrooms, teachers make the best use of the wall space to display learners' work and to provide colourful displays that support the development of learners' grammatical knowledge. Most rooms have interactive white boards and most teachers use these well to support their teaching. Most rooms have IT systems that link into the school's information and communication technology network. This enables learners to have regular access to computers and electronic tablets as part of their lessons for a range of purposes, such as research activities, word processing, constructing graphs and tables or illustrating the outcomes of surveys.
- 74 In nearly all departments, there is a good range of paper-based resources to support modern foreign language learning. These include textbooks, cards and games, and module workbooks that departments have designed to support the curriculum.

Leadership

The role of senior leaders

- 75 Most headteachers and senior leaders try to ensure that learners have the opportunity to learn at least one modern foreign language to examination level during their time at school.
- 76 On average, learners experience three hours of modern foreign language learning across a two-week timetable. This may include learning a new second modern foreign language from scratch in Year 8 or Year 9. However, this is less time than the two hours per week recommended in Estyn's last modern foreign language report.
- 77 Nearly all headteachers and senior curriculum leaders report that ensuring broad and balanced opportunities for learners to study modern foreign languages is a challenge due to the increased requirement for learners to sit two examinations in both English and mathematics at key stage 4.
- 78 Headteachers in larger schools report that they are able to offer modern foreign language opportunities at key stage 4 because learner numbers are viable. The time allocated to classes at key stage 4 is usually in line with that for other non-core subjects. However, even in larger schools, it can be a challenge to timetable lessons into the normal school day for learners who study more than one modern foreign language, due to the increasing time needed by core subjects.
- 79 In schools with smaller numbers, the challenge to provide broad and balanced option choices is far greater. This is because, in a growing number of cases, more subjects are offered in a smaller number of option columns and therefore the competition with other subjects is fierce. This often results in only a very small number of learners opting to continue with a modern foreign language to examination level. As a result, there are a small, but significant, number of schools and local authorities in Wales where a modern foreign language has slipped from the curriculum at key stage 4. As a result, learning a modern foreign language becomes even less important in the eyes of learners and parents.
- 80 Where senior leaders provide small groups of learners with the opportunity to continue with a modern foreign language in key stage 4, they are becoming more creative in the way that they organise the timetable. Often the small group of learners wanting to continue with a modern foreign language attends classes before or after school or during the lunchtime break. This means that learners and teachers put in longer days at school and this is not conducive to effective learning and teaching.
- 81 In a few cases, headteachers allow very small groups of learners to proceed in key stage 4 with challenging targets for the department and its learners. They allow this provision not only to meet the learners' wishes, but also so that the subject is seen as part of the key stage 4 curriculum and hopefully will encourage more learners to take the subject. While this is not cost effective, it has the benefit of building up the status of modern foreign languages as it is visible on the key stage 4 timetable.

- 82 To try to meet learners' wishes, many schools now develop their key stage 4 options through learner-led preferences, as opposed to developing rigid option columns and simply offering a fixed set of constrained choices to pupils. The former method presents senior leaders with challenges but, by and large, this does help to ensure that learners who want to study a modern foreign language can do so.
- 83 As a result of the low numbers taking up modern foreign languages at key stage 4, the take-up of modern foreign languages at AS and A level is comparatively small. Headteachers, senior leaders and heads of department attribute this to the fact that learners often feel that it is harder to get top grades at A level in a modern foreign language and that this might be detrimental to gaining a place at university. Also, where there are not viable numbers for a class in modern foreign languages on one school site, but it is offered on another, learners are put off by having to travel to the other site. Discussions with learners also support these views.
- 84 Additionally, there is very little opportunity for learners to take up a modern foreign language from scratch in Years 12 and 13 to provide a supplementary skill to learners' A levels.

The role of middle leaders

- 85 Most heads of modern foreign language departments and their teams share a clear vision for the modern foreign language provision they wish to offer. However, increasingly, modern foreign language departments do not have a written policy that relates specifically to the department's teaching practices. As a result, there is often no stated policy in relation to the aims and approaches to teaching and learning of modern foreign languages that the department wishes to deliver. This accounts to some degree for the observed practice in many schools of the imbalance between an emphasis on oral and interactive communication and the greater emphasis on written exercises and grammar, and the lack of systematic progression of enabling learners to develop mastery of the language and express themselves creatively.
- 86 Nearly all departments have a well-planned curriculum for modern foreign languages that links well to National Curriculum level descriptors for the four skills. The curriculum often focuses well on a range of topics, allowing learners to talk about themselves, their families, their hobbies and past-times, holidays and so on. In a few cases, the curriculum includes wider topics effectively. These include learning about and discussion of the world of work, the environment and other issues that affect young people's lives.
- 87 In the best cases, the curriculum is planned to allow learners to revisit and extend previous language and structures at different points in key stage 3 and key stage 4. However, only in very few departments do teachers plan the curriculum in this way and enable learners to use the assessed language in everyday transactions in the classroom. This means that teachers in too many classes only teach learners basic transactional language and, while learners often show good understanding of teachers' instructions, they very rarely ask questions of the teacher or seek explanations from the teacher using increasingly complex target language. Where this does occur, it helps to maximise the time in which learners hear and use the assessed language in lessons and it supports the development of greater oral fluency.

- 88 Nearly all schools require heads of department to work with colleagues to produce a self-evaluation report. Heads of department and senior leaders usually discuss the self-evaluation report and set targets for the following year. In many cases, these targets focus predominantly on predicted examination outcomes and do not always focus enough on raising the number of learners opting to follow a modern foreign language at GCSE or A level.
- 89 Despite this, many modern foreign language teachers run extra-curricular activities to help encourage learners to develop an enthusiasm for the subject and thus to opt to study a modern foreign language to examination level. Activities include language clubs during lunchtime and after school, foreign language film clubs, celebrating European languages day and organising trips to the target language countries. During the last few years, modern foreign language teachers have re-focused trips to assessed language countries to link with other activities. For example, learners go abroad to learn how to cook the food of a country through the medium of the target language. These types of activities help learners to understand better how speaking a modern foreign language gives access to a wider range of rewarding experiences.
- 90 In the main, the examinations that learners take in modern foreign languages are at GCSE or A level, both of which are considered by many teachers to be academically demanding. A few schools use other examinations to accommodate learners who may have stronger skills in speaking, listening and reading, but this is not a frequent occurrence. Many teachers report that they do not feel that there is an appropriate suite of modern foreign language examinations to cater for a wider range of ability in key stages 4 and 5. Many teachers would welcome the creation of a GCSE that links language learning and business skills, for example to accommodate and attract learners from a wider range of ability.

Learners' attitudes

- 91 As part of this survey, inspectors spoke to randomly selected groups of learners from Year 9 and learners in Year 10 and Year 11, some of whom had chosen a modern foreign language as an option at key stage 4 and some of whom who had not.
- 92 Many Year 9 learners reported that they liked learning languages and wanted to continue to study a language in Year 10. Most learners expressed a preference to learn French, while a significant minority of learners expressed a preference for learning Spanish or German. A few learners felt that, as they had to learn Welsh as a core subject, to choose another language would be to reduce unduly the other subject choices they could make. In a few cases, learners had very clear reasons about why they wanted to choose other subjects in preference to a modern foreign language.
- 93 Inspectors' interviews with Year 9 learners took place mainly before learners had made their option choices for key stage 4. Many learners felt that it was important to take a language at key stage 4 as it would improve their chances of a job or securing a university place. However, a significant minority of learners were not able to say why studying a language to examination level might be of value. Many learners who

spoke a language other than English as a first language were very aware of many benefits of, and often necessity for, learning another language. Most Year 9 learners interviewed had a limited knowledge of the types of careers where being able to speak another language might be an asset.

- 94 The Year 10 and Year 11 learners who had opted for a modern foreign language offered a range of reasons for doing so. These included their love for the subject and its usefulness in helping them to find a job or to secure a university or training place. Many of those who had not opted for a modern foreign language at key stage 4 had done so either because they had not enjoyed the subject in key stage 3, had found the subject difficult at key stage 3, felt that Welsh was as important a language as those classed as modern foreign languages or that, by not studying a modern foreign language, they therefore benefited by having a greater choice of other subjects. Many had not chosen to study a modern foreign language because the subject was in an option column with another subject that they particularly wanted to study. Overall, Year 10 and Year 11 learners had only a limited understanding of the careers for which the skill of speaking another language might be useful. As with Year 9 learners, those learners who spoke a language other than English as their first language generally had a greater appreciation of the benefits of speaking different languages.

Parental attitudes

- 95 Inspectors invited parents of learners in Year 9 and key stage 4 to share their views of modern foreign language learning (103 parents of Year 9 pupils and 99 parents of Year 10 pupils responded). Four key themes emerged:
- Parents feel that learning a modern foreign language was useful and may lead to better job prospects
 - Parents would like a wider choice of modern foreign languages to be on offer at key stage 4, such as Chinese Mandarin and German, that they felt were used more widely in the world of work
 - Parents feel that there should be more opportunities for learners to take part in foreign exchanges and work experience programmes abroad to enthuse learners and to help them to develop their linguistic and wider life skills
 - Parents would like to see Welsh become optional at key stage 4 so that learners could have the option of studying one or more languages, but languages of their choice

Teacher supply and professional development

- 96 Headteachers in a few schools that have recently made appointments to modern foreign language departments report that in the main they have had an appropriate field of candidates from which to choose. Schools with modern foreign language departments with high numbers of learners in key stage 4 and post-16 report little difficulty in attracting well-qualified multi-lingual teachers to apply for posts.

- 97 On the other hand, headteachers with modern foreign language departments with few or no learners of modern foreign languages in key stage 4 and/or post-16, and headteachers in the west of Wales, report it is much more difficult to recruit teachers for modern foreign languages. Quite often, the linguists applying for these posts are only able to offer one modern foreign language. This reduces flexibility in terms of curriculum planning and learner choice.
- 98 An additional concern is that, in 2014-2015, initial teacher training centres were only able to recruit 50% at most of the quota for modern foreign language trainees allocated to them by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales. Due to the severe decline in number of pupils taking modern foreign languages in schools, there are currently enough modern foreign linguists in the system to meet current needs. However, in order to deliver the strategies for modern foreign languages in the Welsh Government's 'Global Futures' document, that is to achieve a 'bilingual plus 1' nation, the current modern foreign language teaching force is unlikely to be sufficient to expand modern foreign languages into primary schools.
- 99 The number of schools able to appoint a modern foreign language assistant since Estyn's last report has decreased. Heads of department attribute this mostly to cuts in school budgets. The minority of schools that employ a modern foreign languages assistant deploy them mostly with examination groups to have the most impact. Nonetheless, a few foreign language assistants help younger learners through participating or leading extra-curricular clubs.
- 100 Until the end of the summer term 2015, most serving modern foreign language teachers acquired professional development either from working in informal groups with colleagues locally or in language groups across local authorities to develop new ideas and share resources, undertaking training with the CILT Cymru, The National Centre for Languages, or courses offered by examination boards. Most teachers who had been part of networks or who had received training from CILT Cymru or examination boards are able to explain what they gained and how such professional development has helped them in introducing new ideas and materials to the classroom. For example, many schools with support from CILT Cymru ran successful triple literacy activities with the English and Welsh departments in their schools and measured the impact of the activity on their pupils' learning. This has led many schools to adapt the activities and to continue to work collaboratively, foreshadowing the aims and objectives set out in 'Successful Futures'.
- 101 From September 2015, the Welsh Government has tasked the regional consortia to deliver the new vision and strategies for modern foreign language teaching in Wales as set out in 'Global Futures'. Inspectors visited schools across Wales for this survey early in the autumn term 2015, at which time regional consortia had only just identified schools as centres of excellence and programmes for professional development. In the main, modern foreign language teachers welcome this development, particularly to be able to network with colleagues in other schools in their region and beyond. However, it is too early in the process to comment upon the impact of the strategy in this report.

Appendix 1: Evidence base

This report uses evidence from visits to schools, scrutiny of relevant documentation and interviews with headteachers, senior leaders responsible for curriculum, heads of modern foreign language departments, careers' advisers and learners from key stage 3 and key stage 4. The report also draws on inspection evidence about the quality of modern foreign language learning, teaching and leadership as well as recently published research.

Inspectors also asked schools to invite a random selection of parents from Year 9 in key stage 3 and Years 10 and 11 in key stage 4 to answer to a short questionnaire about their understanding of the value and their attitudes towards learning a modern foreign language. Parents were able to answer the questionnaire using a paper-based or electronic form. The report also draws on inspection evidence about the quality of leadership.

Inspectors identified a random sample of twenty English-medium and Welsh-medium schools in the secondary sector. Inspectors' visits took place in the autumn term 2015.

Inspectors also visited and gathered evidence from lead representatives for modern foreign languages in the regional consortia.

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Appendix 3: Case studies

Case study 1: Effective use of internet and social media to promote language learning

Porth County Community School is an English-medium school for 11 to 18-year-old pupils in Rhondda Cynon Taff local authority. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is around 27%, which is well above the average of 17.4% for Wales. The school has 32.6% of pupils on the special education needs register, compared with the Wales national average of 25.2% for all statutory pupils aged 5-15.

The Year 10 Spanish class was working on how to say where they lived and describing their living accommodation. In the previous lesson they had learned the key vocabulary and structures through a series of exercises that helped them to understand the words when spoken and read them when written. They had worked on ensuring that they pronounced the words correctly.

In this lesson they were beginning to develop their language so that they could speak about their own or imagined accommodation. In order to increase their vocabulary and grammar further, the teacher prepared access to a social media site discussion on accommodation and to some Spanish estate agent sites on the internet.

The social media site enabled pupils to read up-to-date Spanish on the topic, which included some slang words and text language. The material required the pupils to use their linguistic knowledge to read and understand the text. Where there were unfamiliar words, the pupils had to use their linguistic skills to guess the meaning using their understanding of the context and Spanish they had learned before. Pupils worked in pairs and shared their ideas.

The Spanish estate agent sites provided pupils with a good range of extended vocabulary, with which they could begin to build an oral description of their own or imagined accommodation.

The use of social media and the internet to support pupils' learning motivated them to produce good oral, and eventually written, descriptions of their own or imagined accommodation as well as providing them with up-to-date Spanish expressions.

Case study 2: Effective use of software to engage pupils and enhance their learning

St Cyres School is an English-medium school for 11 to 18-year-old pupils in Vale of Glamorgan local authority. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is around 17.3% which is in line with the average of 17.4% for Wales. The school has 29.9% of pupils on the special education needs register, compared with the national average of 25.2% for all statutory pupils aged 5-15.

Teachers in the modern foreign language department in St Cyres make good use of software to prepare teaching material, quizzes and tests which motivate pupils to learn a range of aspects of language acquisition.

Teachers are able to customise the materials in advance to fit with the topic they are teaching. Being able to customise the material means that teachers can use the software for different languages and can customise the level of difficulty appropriate to the level of the class. At the most difficult level, for example, they may provide the same sentence four times with slight variations in the grammar. This focuses the pupils on how well they understand the grammar within a context.

During lessons, teachers are able to put up the material on interactive whiteboards and allocate a time slot in which the pupils must answer the question in the language, or make a choice as to the correct answer. Pupils can also see the questions on electronic tablets. Pupils can either work in pairs or individually to choose the correct answer in the time slot allocated. The teacher can then feed back how many pupils in the class got the answer right and they can also look at how well different groups of pupils achieved, for example, girls versus boys.

This type of activity is very popular with pupils who enjoy the competitiveness of the activity and pupils improve their grammatical skills well.

Case study 3: Moving from mimicry to mastery of a modern foreign language

Bishop Hedley High School is an English-medium school for 11 to 16-year-old pupils in Merthyr local authority. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is around 22.5%, which is above the average of 17.4% for Wales. The school has 29.7% of pupils on the special education needs register, compared with the Wales national average of 25.2% for all statutory pupils aged 5-15.

Modern foreign language teachers in Bishop Hedley High School have high expectations of their pupils and they have a very clear focus in language lessons on encouraging pupils, whatever their stage of learning and ability, to use the assessed language as much as possible.

To foster this, wall displays in classrooms are thoughtfully set out and they remind pupils of vocabulary, linguistic structures and grammar in the assessed language. Colour-coding is used to advantage to remind pupils of endings of verbs, gender of nouns etc. Teachers actively encourage pupils to use the wall displays as references during lessons whether they are speaking, reading or writing in the assessed language.

At early stages of language learning, teachers teach pupils simple vocabulary and phrases that allow them to operate in the assessed language in the classroom. As pupils progress, teachers introduce them to more complex language that might be used to work in a modern foreign languages classroom and to speaking about grammar in the assessed language. As a result, most pupils develop good listening skills and most pupils are keen to persevere even when the language is beyond the level they have attained so far. Teachers pay good attention to correcting mispronunciation in the assessed language and ensuring that pupils can read aloud with accuracy of intonation and expression in the language.

As learning progresses, pupils show good levels of confidence and fluency in speaking the language. With this greater exposure to the assessed language in the lesson time available, most pupils move effectively through the stage of mimicking the language to mastering the language, that is being able to use the assessed language independently, creatively and for their own purposes.

Case study 4: Sequencing activities to enable pupils to build their skills in modern foreign languages incrementally

Bryn Hafren Comprehensive School is an English-medium school for 11 to 18-year-old pupils in Vale of Glamorgan local authority. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is around 28.9%, which is well above the average of 17.4% for Wales. The school has 28.2% of pupils on the special education needs register, compared with the Wales national average of 25.2% for all statutory pupils aged 5-15.

Teachers at Bryn Hafren Comprehensive School plan lessons effectively to ensure that the activities they use build sequentially on one another to scaffold pupils' learning.

Most lessons typically begin with quick, settling exercises that help pupils to recall new vocabulary and structures learned in previous lessons. These exercises are useful in helping to stimulate pupils' memories and settle them into the language class.

Where new language is to be introduced, teachers take time to ensure that pupils understand the word or structure and can pronounce it correctly. To ensure pupils not only pronounce the word correctly, but can read the word correctly, teachers show the written word alongside the image they may use. Before allowing pupils to practise in pairs or groups, teachers ensure that the practice will be effective by modelling how to practise the language with different members of the class.

Having had the opportunity to practise the new language, teachers provide pupils with communication gap activities that require them not only to use the language that they have just learned, but also to use language learned previously. At this point, there is usually a good focus on using multi-skill activities, for example reading and explaining the key points to another person, finding out information by reading, listening and/or watching short paragraphs and/or clips, followed write notes to explain to someone else. At this stage these are controlled activities, which should produce similar outcomes based on the materials.

These stages may be said to enable pupils to mimic the language they are learning. However, the next stages help to develop pupils' mastery of the language.

At the next stage, the teacher creates activities that allow pupils to practise the language of topic, but which also provide a guided while allowing a more personal response to the work set. The teacher may set the skill in which the outcome of the task is expressed – for example to present an oral report, to produce a leaflet, to produce a radio interview about the subject.

At the last stage, the teacher presents the pupils with an open-ended challenge based on the language they have been learning. This is an opportunity for pupils to use the language they have learned in this topic and topics that they have learned beforehand in a creative way. For example, pupils may be asked to watch a short film and respond to it in the way they choose – writing an account, writing a critique, making an oral presentation, or writing a blog.

Inclusion of these last two stages is very important if pupils are to be able to use the language that they learn fluently and for their own purposes.

Appendix 4: Stages of teaching and learning in mastering a modern foreign language

Stages		Activity	Suggested teaching activity	Suggested learning activity	Differentiation	Formative assessment opportunities
Stage 1	CORE	Input	<p>Presentation of new vocabulary and structures relevant to the topic: oral repetition with strong focus on pronunciation and intonation, always starting with cognitives;</p> <p>reading new vocabulary and structures aloud with strong focus on relating the sounds of the language to the written word;</p> <p>listening and reading to recognise new vocabulary and structures</p>	<p>Repeating after the teacher in groups, pairs, individually focussing on mimicking the sounds;</p> <p>internalising vocabulary and structures through spelling in the alphabet of the target language; reading vocabulary and structures aloud to develop understanding of the sounds of the language in relation to the written word;</p> <p>mixed skill activities – listening plus reading to match new vocabulary and structures;</p> <p>listening plus writing to confirm understanding and accuracy of spelling of new vocabulary and structures</p>	Mostly by outcome and support	<p>Ability of learners to pronounce new vocabulary and structures well according to pronunciation rules of the language</p> <p>Ability of learners to recognise the new vocabulary and structures by hearing and in written form</p> <p>Ability of learners to read aloud new vocabulary and structures according to the rules of the target language</p> <p>Ability to recognise and write new vocabulary and structures in the target language</p>
Stage 2	CORE	Practice	<p>Range of communicative mixed-skill activities (key focus speaking and listening) to allow pupils to practise vocabulary and new structures till they are secure. For example:</p> <p>Pair work/group work: oral/listening/reading work</p>	<p>Pair work/group work exercises that require learners to practise new vocabulary and structures learned – for example, paired work using word and/or visual cards to prompt oral questions and full sentence answers in the language</p>	Mostly by outcome and support	<p>Ability of learners to recognise and understand new vocabulary and structures through listening and reading when new vocabulary and structures are combined in different</p>

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			using card or prompts on electronic tablets focussed on new vocabulary and structures, such as Q and A, Kim's game, matching the same, guessing games, snap	<u>listening and reading exercises</u> to distinguish new vocabulary and structures, confirm understanding of meaning (answers by choosing key words/phrases in assessed language, by choosing visual prompts, by making notes on grid etc, by writing one word or full sentence answers in English) <u>writing exercises</u> in the assessed language – dictation of words/phrases, using sequence prompts (words and/or visuals) to write short paragraphs using the key language being learned. <u>Cloze gap exercises</u> – completing a paragraph by filling in the word or missing phrase <u>Ordering cards with written target language</u> to make a coherent paragraph		<u>ways.</u> Ability of learners to use the written form of new vocabulary and structures in different ways which show <u>ability to create short, coherent written paragraphs.</u>
Stage 3	CORE	Consolidation	Range of activities requiring pupils to use new vocabulary and structures in an more extended way – longer role-plays combining the elements, longer listening and reading passages to understand, tasks requiring pupils to write paragraphs, short accounts	Exposure <u>to longer listening and reading exercises</u> that <u>incorporate both older and newly learned vocabulary and structures</u> – pair/work and group work using activities, such as jigsaw reading and listening. <u>Paired oral presentations</u> that are a <u>product</u> of the listening and reading exercises and <u>are recorded by pupils (notes only/no writing out full paragraphs!)</u>	Mostly by outcome and support	Ability of learners to understand and express ideas <u>combing new and previously learned vocabulary and structures effectively for coherent meaning with a key focus on oral presentation</u> Opportunities for self and peer assessment

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<p>Stage 4</p>	<p>DEVELOPMENT</p>	<p>Progression</p>	<p><u>Range of structured/prompted, but more open-ended tasks</u> that require learners to exercise their own choice in using new and previously learned vocabulary and structures. This stage <u>needs a greater degree of specific differentiation by task</u> to ensure that most learners in the class are challenged in line with their abilities. It involves learners being exposed to multi-skill activities with a real purpose – for example, to find something out and report on it verbally and/or in written assessed language.</p>	<p><u>A carousel of simulated activities with clear instructions through which to find out information about the topic.</u> Learners <u>may work in individually or in pairs/groups to share their knowledge to complete the whole task.</u> For example, the focus might be a road accident: learners listen to a recorded witness statement, watch a short film of a bystander saying what happened, read two witness accounts, all of which will contain elements of the same, but also different information. The <u>outcome</u> of the task is that the <u>learner writes/presents an oral report of the accident for the newspaper, representing the different points of view gleaned from the different witness accounts.</u> In carrying out these types of tasks, learners need to also focus on developing <u>essential and wider skills:</u> problem-solving, note-taking, use of dictionaries, research, text-analysis, drafting written work in a report style, for oral presentations – voice, pronunciation, intonation, key facts etc.</p>	<p>Mostly by task. According to ability range in class the same task may need to be produced in several forms to provide more or less prompts for learners of different levels of ability.</p>	<p>Ability of learners <u>to understand new and previously learned language in different formats and, as a result of understanding, to produce their own guided oral presentation or writing in a particular genre, showing their understanding of audience</u></p> <p>Opportunities to assess the application of grammatical knowledge</p> <p>Opportunities for self and peer assessment</p>
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<p>Stage 5</p>	<p>EXTENSION</p>	<p>Challenge</p>		<p>This stage has a greater focus on learners working independently. <u>Open-ended tasks supported by a bank of materials and/or internet references which require learners to use all four language skills to develop their own creative responses through the medium they choose</u> – for example, spoken presentations, written presentations (e.g. reports, a play, diary writing, story writing for children/teenagers), animation, art, poetry, film. Tasks might include such things as picture prompts about which learners tell a story, further research about a topic related to the one they have been studying, an adjacent topic to the one they have been studying etc <u>Learners should be encouraged to bring all their subject knowledge to bear in this task and to use their full range of the target language.</u></p>	<p>Mostly by open-ended task allowing for creativity Dependent on the ability of learners, teachers may wish to have a colour-coded bank of tasks differentiated for the least, average and most able in the class. <u>For the most able learners materials should take learners slightly out of their comfort zone, so that they have to apply higher order skills in language learning.</u></p>	<p>Opportunities to <u>assess the full extent of learners' ability to understand, apply their knowledge and produce structured and creative outcomes in the target language</u>, as well as the ability to <u>apply essential and wider skills, particularly independent working.</u></p>
<p>Stage 6</p>		<p>Summative Assessment</p>	<p>Range of activities using all, or some, of the four language skills as appropriate to test out learners' understanding and ability to apply effectively the knowledge and skills gained in the module/topic</p>		<p>By task and outcome</p>	<p>Clear assessment guidance in place to mark and moderate</p>

Appendix 5: Outcomes of questionnaires for parents of learners in Year 9 and key stage 4

The views of parents of Year 9 pupils

Nearly all children of the 103 parents surveyed are currently learning a modern foreign language at school. Most of these Year 9 parents consider it important for their child to be able to learn a modern foreign language at secondary school. The most common reasons given for this were that it could improve employment opportunities, raise awareness and understanding of other cultures and be useful when travelling in the future.

The parents that were unsure, or did not consider it important for their child to learn a modern foreign language at school, felt that other subjects were more important, their child had no interest in learning the languages on offer, did not see the value as 'most countries that we trade with speak English' or were unsure if it would be beneficial in the future as their child was unsure of their career plans.

Language choices

When asked which three languages they thought would be the most useful to learn, parents thought these would be French (76%) and Spanish (74%), followed by German (46%) and Chinese (Mandarin) (41%).

The most common reasons underpinning these choices were that these languages are important for global business and trade links and would therefore improve future employment opportunities, are widely spoken around the world, are useful for future travel or because the country that speaks that language is geographically close to the United Kingdom.

Careers advice

Most parents surveyed said that they had not received any advice from the school relating to the potential usefulness of modern foreign languages in the future. Of the small number of parents who had received careers advice, this was either through an options evening at school, discussions with teachers, a school career's officer or friends, the job centre or their child receiving advice during a careers session at school.

Attitudes towards learning a modern foreign language

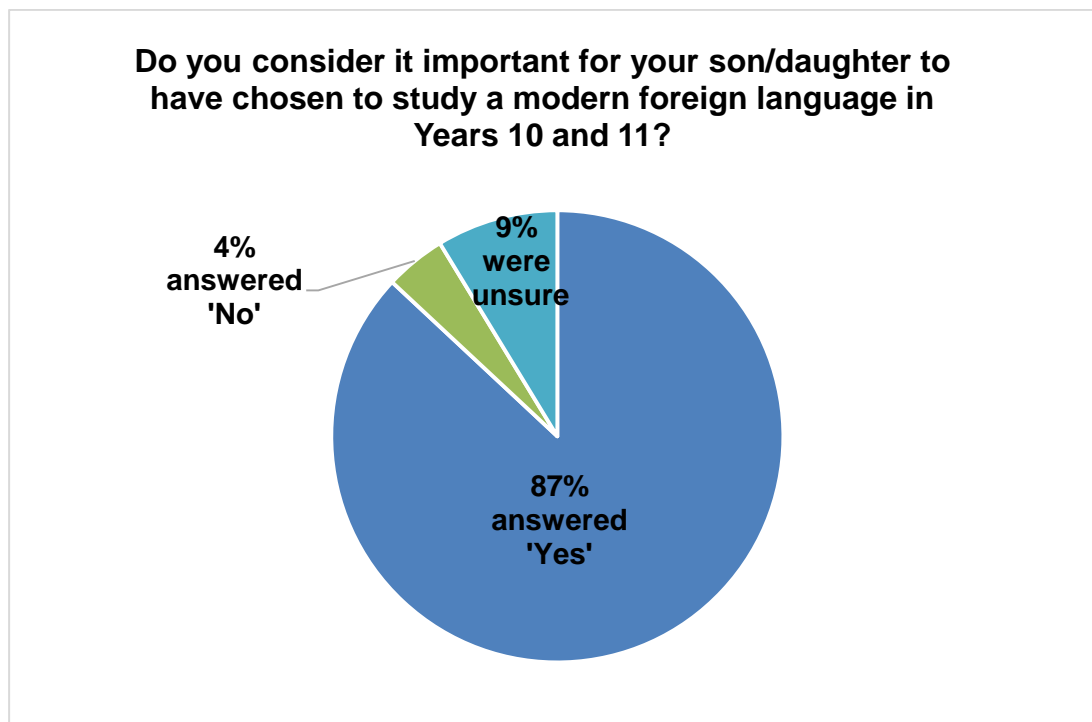
The majority of parents (65%) felt that their child enjoys learning a modern foreign language and they would like to continue it into key stage 4. A further 10% of parents responded that their child would like to continue with a modern foreign language in key stage 4 even though they find it challenging, and 4% of respondents thought that their child would continue learning a modern foreign language in key stage 4 even though they did not enjoy it. Only a few parents (11%) stated that their child will not continue learning a modern foreign language because they do not enjoy learning one.

The views of parents of Year 10 pupils

Modern foreign language options at key stage 4

Of the 99 parent respondents with a child in key stage 4, 71% said their child was studying a modern foreign language as an examination option. The most common languages studied to examination level were French, German and Spanish.

Many (87%) of those parents whose child was studying a modern foreign language at key stage 4 considered it important. A further 9% were unsure and 4% did not consider it important.



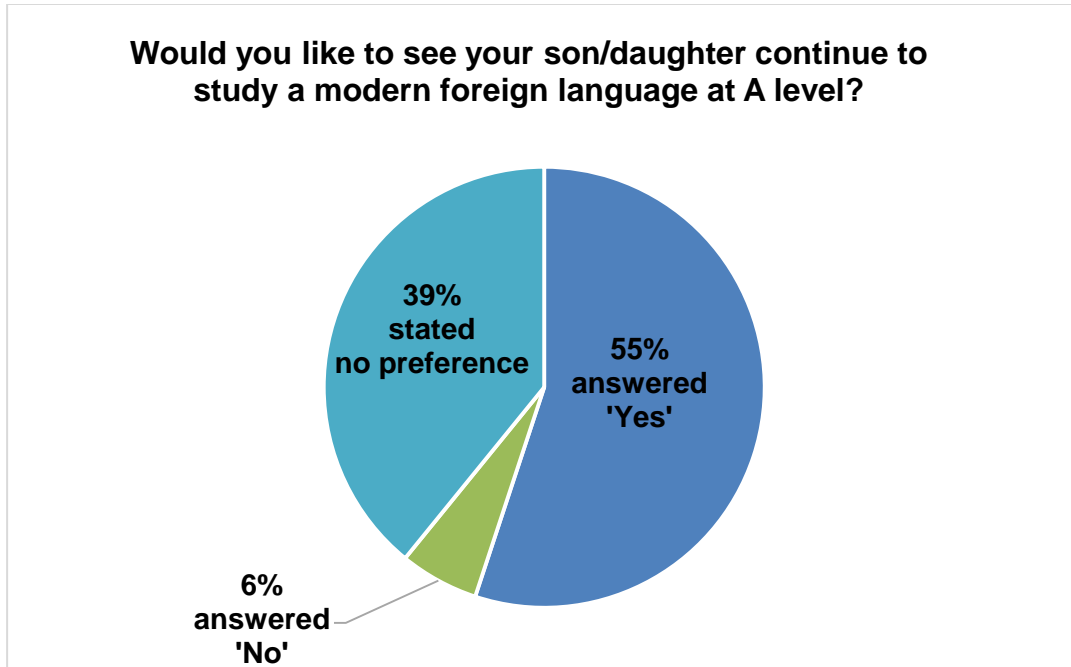
Source: Estyn survey data, 2015.

Many parents commented that it benefited their child to learn a modern foreign language for a variety of reasons. These included broadening learners' horizons for the future, increasing employment opportunities, improving their understanding of other cultures, being helpful when travelling or applying to university, developing an awareness of language development, receiving a broad education and developing transferable and complementary skills.

A few parents raised concerns about the limited number of options available to learners in key stage 4 due to the number of compulsory subjects, with a very few stating that they felt their child would have selected a modern foreign language if they had more choices. A further few parents specifically stated that the compulsory nature of Welsh contributed to their child not studying a modern foreign language.

Attitudes towards continuing to learn a modern foreign language at A level

Around half (55%) of the surveyed parents whose child is learning a modern foreign language at key stage 4 would like their child to continue to study a modern foreign language at A level. A further 39% expressed no preference.



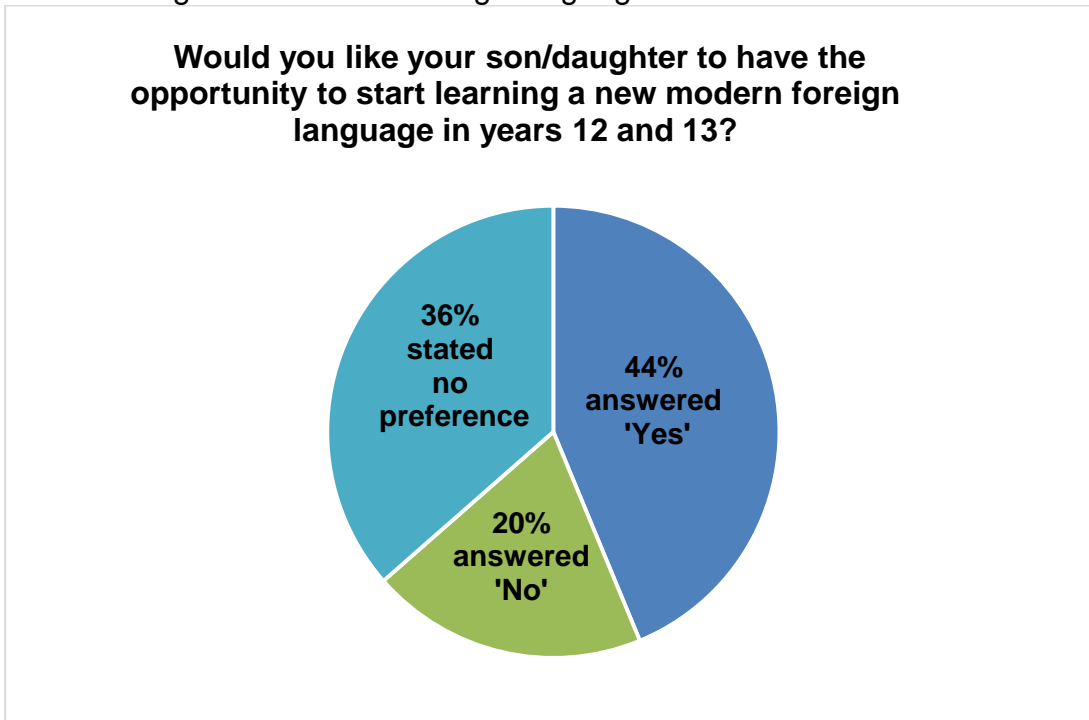
Source: Estyn survey data, 2015

Parents felt that it would be beneficial for future career options, broaden learners' horizons, and improve learners' future study options. A few parents stated that it would be their child's choice. Only a very few parents explicitly stated that they would encourage their child to continue studying a modern foreign language at A level.

Many of the parents who responded that they were either unsure or did not want their child to continue with a modern foreign language at A level stated that it was the child's choice whether or not to continue, or that their child would prioritise other subjects which were more relevant to their chosen career.

Attitudes towards learning a new foreign language at in Year 12

A minority (44%) of parents surveyed would like their child to have the opportunity to start learning a new modern foreign language in Years 12 and 13.



Source: Estyn survey data, 2015

Those parents who indicated that they would like their child to have the opportunity to start learning a new language felt that their child would develop linguistic skills that can be transferred into other situations, and find it useful for future travel and employment opportunities. The majority (62%) of these parents would like their child to have the opportunity to learn Spanish. Other popular choices were French (31%), German (31%), Chinese (Mandarin) (24%) and Italian (21%).

Those parents who indicated that they were unsure, or did not want their child to have the opportunity to learn a new language, raised concerns about the additional work pressure it would put on their child, preferred their child to learn one language in depth to build their confidence, felt that the current choice of languages was too limited, or wanted that their child to focus on other subjects that are more relevant to their career.

Modern foreign languages in Year 9

This year Estyn is undertaking a survey to gather information about the quality of teaching and learning in modern foreign languages in Wales, pupils' and parents' attitudes to learning a modern foreign language and how learning another language may contribute to future employment. This short survey explores parent's attitudes to learning a modern foreign language and should take less than 10 minutes to complete. All responses will be anonymous and we will only report on the key messages which emerge from the questionnaire. No comment or individual will be identifiable at any stage. The final report will be published on the Estyn website in summer 2016. For the purposes of this survey we do not count Welsh as a modern foreign language as it is a compulsory part of the current curriculum.

1. Does your son/daughter learn a modern foreign language in school at the moment?

Yes (go to question 2) No (go to question 3)

2. If you answered 'yes' to question 1, which language(s) does your child currently learn at school? (Please select all that apply).

Chinese (Mandarin) Czech French German Greek Hindi
 Italian Polish Portuguese Romanian Russian Spanish
 Turkish Urdu Other (please specify): _____

3. Do you consider it to be important for your son/daughter to be able to learn a modern foreign language at secondary school?

Yes (go to question 4) No (go to question 5) Unsure (go to question 4)

Please give your reasons for your answer

4. Which modern foreign language(s) do you think it would be most useful for your son/daughter to learn? (Please select up to 3).

Chinese (Mandarin) Czech French German Greek Hindi
 Italian Polish Portuguese Romanian Russian Spanish
 Turkish Urdu Other (please specify): _____

Please explain why you feel that the language(s) you selected above would be most beneficial for your son/daughter to learn?

5. Have you received any advice about any jobs or careers for which being able to speak a modern foreign language would be helpful?

Yes (go to question 6) No (go to question 8)

6. If you answered 'yes' to question 5, who provided the information or advice regarding jobs or careers referred to in the previous question?

7. How useful was the information that you received?

Very useful Somewhat useful Not very useful Not at all useful

8. How would you describe your son/daughter's attitude to learning a modern foreign language?

- Enjoys learning a modern foreign language and would like to continue in key stage 4
- Enjoys learning another language, and even though they find it difficult, would like to continue to key stage 4
- Enjoys learning another language but finds it difficult and therefore will not continue in key stage 4
- Does not enjoy learning another language and would not like to continue in key stage 4
- Does not enjoy learning another language but would like to continue to key stage 4 as they think it will be useful
- Has no preference
- Does not currently learn a language

Please leave any comments in relation to this question below

9. Please leave any other comments you have regarding modern foreign languages in school below.

Many thanks for taking the time to complete this survey.

The final report on modern foreign languages in key stages 3 and 4 will be published in summer 2016 on the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales).

Modern foreign languages at key stage 4

This year Estyn is undertaking a survey to gather information about the quality of teaching and learning in modern foreign languages in Wales, pupils' and parents' attitudes to learning a modern foreign language and how learning another language may contribute to future employment. This short survey explores parent's attitudes to learning a modern foreign language and should take less than 10 minutes to complete. All responses will be anonymous and we will only report on the key messages which emerge from the questionnaire. No comment or individual will be identifiable at any stage. The final report will be published on the Estyn website in summer 2016. For the purposes of this survey we do not count Welsh as a modern foreign language as it is a compulsory part of the current curriculum.

1. Is your son/daughter currently learning a modern foreign language in key stage 4?

Yes (go to question 2) No (go to question 5)

2. If you answered 'yes' to question 1, which language(s) does your son/daughter learn at school at the moment? (Please select all that apply).

Chinese (Mandarin) Czech French German Greek Hindi
 Italian Polish Portuguese Romanian Russian Spanish
 Turkish Urdu Other (please specify): _____

3. Do you consider it important for your son/daughter to have chosen to study a modern foreign language in years 10 and 11?

Yes No Unsure

Please give your reasons for your answer

4. Did you want your son/daughter to continue to learn a modern foreign language in years 10 and 11? (Then go to question 6)

Yes No No preference

Please give your reasons for your answer

5. If you answered 'no' to question 2, would you like to see your son/daughter continue to study a modern foreign language at A level?

Yes No No preference

Please give your reasons for your answer

6. Would you like your son/daughter to have the opportunity to start learning a new modern foreign language in years 12 and 13?

Yes (go to question 7) No (go to question 8) No preference (go to question 8)

Please give your reasons for your answer

7. If you answered 'yes' to question 6, which language(s) would you like your son/daughter to have the opportunity to start learning in year 12? (Please select up to 3).

- Chinese (Mandarin) Czech French German Greek Hindi
 Italian Polish Portuguese Romanian Russian Spanish
 Turkish Urdu Other (please specify): _____

Please explain why you would like your child to have the opportunity to learn the language(s) you have selected

8. Have you received any advice about any jobs or careers for which being able to speak a modern foreign language would be helpful?

- Yes (go to question 9) No (go to question 11)

9. If you answered 'yes' to question 8, who provided the information or advice regarding jobs or careers referred to in the previous question?

10. How useful was the information that you received?

- Very useful Somewhat useful Not very useful Not at all useful

11. How would you describe your son/daughter's attitude to learning a modern foreign language?

- Enjoys learning a modern foreign language and would like to continue to A-level
 Enjoys learning another language, and even though they find it difficult, would like to continue to A-level
 Enjoys learning another language but finds it difficult and therefore will not continue to A-level
 Does not enjoy learning another language and would not like to continue to A-level
 Does not currently learn a language but would like to start learning one in year 12
 Does not want to learn a modern foreign language
 Has no preference regarding learning a language

Please leave any comments in relation to this question below

12. Please leave any other comments you have regarding modern foreign languages in school below.

Many thanks for taking the time to complete this survey.

The final report on modern foreign languages in key stages 3 and 4 will be published in summer 2016 on the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales).

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