

Mandarin Excellence Programme Evaluation Report 2019/2020

A report for the UCL IOE Confucius Institute for Schools and
the Department for Education

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**Mandarin
Excellence
Programme**

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The UCL IOE Confucius Institute for Schools (IOE CI) is the lead delivery partner for the Mandarin Excellence Programme which is funded by the Department for Education. The IOE CI supports schools in the sustainable development of the teaching and learning of Mandarin Chinese and the study of China across other areas of the curriculum. As well as a small team of specialists in London, the IOE CI has an extensive network of secondary and primary schools across England which have Mandarin Chinese firmly embedded in the curriculum. IOE CI's vision is that every child in England who wishes to is able to learn Chinese and that every school has access to high quality Chinese teaching. Key to the realisation of this vision is the development of the effective teaching of Chinese language in schools in England and beyond.

IOE CI sits within the school of UCL called the UCL Institute of Education (IOE). Founded in 1902, IOE is a world leading centre for research and teaching in education and social science and is a major provider of teacher education. It currently has more than 8,000 students and 800 staff. In December 2014 IOE became a single-faculty school of UCL.



The British Council is a delivery partner for the Mandarin Excellence Programme. The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. It was founded in 1934 and incorporated by Royal Charter in 1940. The British Council aims to create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. It does this by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries it works with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust. The British Council works in more than 100 countries across the world in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. In 2018 its work engaged with nearly 80 million people directly and reached 791 million people overall including online, social media and through broadcast and publications.



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Executive Summary

- The Mandarin Excellence Programme (MEP) remains on track against its output targets and is achieving its overall ambition of creating a cohort of students in state schools in England on the path to fluency in Mandarin.
- Seventy-six schools are now (April 2020) engaged in MEP, more than the 71 schools projected for this stage:
 - One school has dropped out of the Programme throughout its lifespan,
 - One school currently within the Programme is closing at the end of the current academic year which will leave 75 participating schools in 2020/2021
- 3,056 students across these schools took end of year MEP Hurdle tests in Summer 2019. An estimated 2,000 additional students joined in Year 7 at the start of 2019/2020 meaning that the Programme is on track against its ambition to have 5,000 students on the path to fluency by 2020.
- Data suggest that the annual drop-out rate of students within the MEP is around 5%.
- Three hundred and sixty first generation MEP students, who joined the Programme in 2016/2017, took the Year 9 Hurdle tests (the most advanced tests so far) in 2018/2019. Of these, 84% had an average score of 60% or above, with 23% scoring above 90%. Only 8% scored below 50%. This first cohort of MEP students looks to be on track to obtain strong results in GCSEs.
- The second generation of MEP students, who joined in 2017/2018, includes students in the first group of schools to be recruited without previous experience of Mandarin in the curriculum. These students took Year 8 Hurdle tests in 2018/2019. Results for this cohort of students are also strong but they are weaker than the Year 8 results from 2017/2018 which only included students from the more experienced schools.
- Teachers continue to believe that their students show increased and accelerated learning and a much broader language and cultural knowledge base relative to non-MEP learners.
- Evidence for the acceleration of learning is the minority of schools which say that they expect most of their MEP students to follow a compressed exams pathway. We do not have complete data but leaders in at least nine schools say that they are expecting the majority of students to sit GCSE Mandarin in Year 9 and a further 5 expect them to do so in Year 10.
- Many teachers and school leaders talk positively about the impact of MEP on students' self-esteem and the development of a sense of pride and obligation among participants which is often seen to extend to students across the whole school.
- Feedback from schools indicates that a desire to introduce Mandarin onto the curriculum, an ambition to enhance the brand image and reputation of the school and to access finance remain the key motivations for schools to join the Programme.
- In our Wave 1 report we noted that of the 50 non-Hub schools which have joined MEP in cohorts 2 and 3, at least 26 had not previously taught Mandarin within the curriculum. Of the thirteen new schools which joined MEP in 2019/20 we know that at least 10 had not previously taught Mandarin. So to date, excluding the original Hub schools, at least two thirds of the schools in the Programme had not previously taught Mandarin in the curriculum. The Programme is succeeding in expanding the availability of Mandarin teaching and learning within the state sector.
- The conclusion of our Wave 1 report about the role of MEP in motivating schools to adopt Mandarin also remains. MEP is best seen as a catalyst and dramatic accelerator of the uptake of Mandarin in the state sector rather than the sole reason for adoption. The availability of the Programme and the financial and teaching support it offers has helped translate an often vague vision or aspiration held by school leaders relatively quickly into the delivery of an intensive, high quality course within 76 state schools.
- Most schools joining the Programme have an underlying ethos which not only aspires to excellence across the curriculum but also prioritises internationalisation and preparing their children for work in a globalised world.
- As the number of schools joining the Programme has increased, coverage has become nationwide and the geographic clustering of schools, predominantly in the main population centres of the country, has become more apparent.

“ We have only been teaching in the MEP for one half term. So far, the mastery and depth of knowledge achieved by MEP students far outstrips that achieved by their peers in mainstream Mandarin classes. **Teacher** ”

- As successive MEP cohorts have joined, the participation of multiple schools within a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) has emerged as an important dynamic driving recruitment into the Programme. Schools within a MAT share an overarching ethos. Communication and the possibility of resource sharing within a MAT is enhanced and MATs typically support schools in the same geographic area.
- The Programme consciously focuses on excellence and a number of participating schools are among the academically top performing state schools in the country. Many others are at the very least academic leaders in their local area. Thirteen MEP schools are grammar schools (17% vs 5% nationally) and a relatively high share are faith schools. All schools in the Programme prioritise student (and parent) motivation as a major criterion for participation but typically, participating students are among the most academically able in their school.
- Although in the minority, there are several schools which have embraced MEP successfully while serving communities which are relatively deprived. Some of these schools are in predominantly white British catchment areas, while others are in catchment areas with a highly diverse community. In all of these schools an important role of MEP continues to be its perceived ability to raise the expectations and widen the horizons – literally and metaphorically - of both students and parents.

“ In our area of social deprivation, the MEP offers life-changing opportunities.

Head Teacher/School Leader ”

- MEP also affords students opportunities to mix and participate on an equal footing with children from other backgrounds. Thirty-four schools in the Programme say they have participated in the annual HSBC/British Council Mandarin speaking competition, a national competition for non-native speakers which historically has been dominated by independent schools.
- A clear majority of staff involved in MEP continues to regard the Programme as a success.
 - 72% of respondents to our latest MEP staff survey regard the Programme as either Very Successful (41%) or Successful (31%) – with a further 11% saying it is too early to tell.
 - 95% describe themselves as either Positive Advocates for the Programme (57%) or Supporters

(38%) with positivity common across teachers and school leaders:

“ This programme has revolutionised the way our students learn languages and given our students the most amazing enrichment opportunities which has brought this language to life in many different contexts.

Headteacher/School leader ”

- The finance within MEP typically allows a school to recruit a Mandarin teacher and to establish the subject on the curriculum. Many schools have increased efficiency by part-sharing teaching resources. Of the seventy-two schools which responded to our MEP survey, twenty-six (36%) say that they have teachers who teach Mandarin in other schools. Of these, ten say that teachers teach in other schools within MEP and nine in other schools within the MAT (several of which are also part of MEP).
- Several schools have also initiated links with local primary schools so that MEP teachers spend perhaps a day per week giving taster sessions to local Year 6 pupils. Other schools have introduced Mandarin teaching in KS5 for students without prior knowledge of the language.
- The most commonly identified practical challenge to delivery of MEP remains timetabling and ensuring that the minimum four hours of F2F teaching within the Programme are available to students. The focus on the challenge of timetabling is probably more acute this year than it was at the time of our previous research in 2018/19 because the Programme is more embedded and includes more year groups in a greater number of schools than last year.
- As a result of pressure on timetabling, most schools within MEP deliver the required four hours of F2F teaching with the remaining four hours being guided self-study.
- There is wide variation but if there is a typical MEP school, it delivers three hours of this F2F teaching within the standard school timetable and the one extra hour outside the timetable. Extra hours for MEP from within the timetable are occasionally taken from another language, potentially reducing choice, although this is unusual. More commonly, the hours are taken from personal development time, from tutor time or from subjects ranging across, for example, Music, Art or design.

- The delivery model for out-of-hours F2F teaching varies enormously. Often it involves lunchtime or after-school classes but some schools run classes before school or on occasions on Saturday morning.
- The fundamental driver of improved learning outcomes is still seen to be the enhanced (typically four) F2F classroom hours. It is the more extensive contact hours allowing for language and cultural learning and the fact that the contact and exposure to the language is relatively continuous throughout the school week that teachers believe is really making the difference to the speed and quality of learning outcomes.
- The value of the intensive study period in China for Year 8s and its parallel study period at Nottingham University for Year 9s has become more apparent to teachers as more schools have joined the Programme. The intensive study periods are seen to have multiple benefits including reinforcing language learning, offering a unique and sometimes life-changing cultural experience, building students' confidence, resilience and self-esteem and allowing students to meet, study and socialise with their peers from across the country on an equal basis. The opportunity to participate in these study periods also acts as a significant motivator for students.
- As the centre of gravity of the participating schools has moved more towards schools new to teaching Mandarin in the curriculum, the range and quality of support provided by IOE CI has become even more appreciated across the Programme. During the most recent wave of research we have heard many unsolicited comments of praise both for individual members of the IOE CI team and for the institution as a whole.
- An important, specific area of support from IOE CI has been to the small number of schools which have struggled to deliver the Programme. When this has happened it has generally been for one of two different reasons: Either the school as a whole has been experiencing difficulties or an individual teacher has encountered difficulties professionally or personally. Exactly half of the MEP schools replying to our survey say that they have only one Mandarin teacher in the school which makes the Programme in those schools heavily dependent on that one individual.
- As MEP has expanded and the ability level of students has risen, Hanban teachers, who are only available to support MEP through IOE CI, are playing an increasingly important role in many schools. On occasions they are shared between schools within the Programme or Hub schools lend them to spoke schools for a few days a week.
- Evidence for the effectiveness of the Hub and Spoke model of support remains mixed with some positive examples and some negative ones. To some extent the model has been overtaken by co-operation of schools within MATs, some of which are formally Hub and Spoke schools anyway.
- The Programme is having a positive impact on the supply of Mandarin teachers. Expansion of the number of schools teaching Mandarin is increasing the number of schools able to offer opportunities for teaching practice. In the 2019/2020 academic year 20 MEP schools offered placements to PGCE students. A number of MEP schools are Teaching Schools and in some cases teachers of other languages at MEP schools have enrolled in the Mandarin Upskilling course delivered by IOE Confucius Institute.
- Twenty-eight schools in our survey (39%) said that teachers have trained or are currently training to teach Mandarin while the school has been part of MEP. Indeed, a number of teachers now delivering MEP trained in the Programme in the same school or transitioned from another MEP school elsewhere.
- Teaching styles and specific practice within MEP vary by school and by teacher as they do across all subjects. A few teachers use almost all of their own resources in the classroom but the majority structure lessons and the term around units within a textbook. Jin Bu is now becoming almost standard in KS3.
- Teachers are very conscious that a requirement for rote learning as a foundation in Mandarin doesn't lead to boredom and demotivation, so sessions of vocabulary drilling are often mixed up with language games, quizzes, peer-to-peer practice and sometimes videos or singing, especially in KS3. Teachers typically try to combine language learning with wider learning about Chinese culture to provide both broader understanding and a more varied and interesting lesson.
- The structure and focus of self-guided out-of-classroom learning is markedly different to that within the classroom. Teachers often use the projects provided by UCL IOE for Years 7, 8, 9 and describe them as being very helpful, while students are generally enthusiastic about working on them. Technology platforms and apps are used very widely to help students practise and consolidate learning at home. Resources are often shared between teachers and students via learning platforms such as Edmodo or Frog while a range of Mandarin specific apps are used by teachers, most commonly GoChinese and Quizlet. The interactive,

- fun element of these is seen to be effective. Although outside the specific remit of this evaluation, the role these platforms and apps can play in supporting learning during the Covid-19 pandemic is clear.
- Research for this report confirms our previous finding that a large majority of schools which have entered the Programme have done so as part of a long term commitment to the language based on a belief in its importance for children in the 21st century. They have implemented Mandarin on the curriculum through MEP, they have recruited teachers and acquired resources and they now see Mandarin as a fixed element of the curriculum for the future.
 - Were funding for MEP to cease, only three of 41 schools responding say that they would be likely to cease teaching Mandarin completely but at the same time only two of the 41 schools say that they would continue with a Programme of a similar intensity to MEP. The majority say that that they would most likely continue with a Mandarin Programme more similar in intensity to other modern foreign languages offered in the school.
 - The perceived challenges to maintaining an intensive and accelerated Programme are seen by school leaders to be finance, teaching capacity and timetabling within the curriculum.
 - The success of MEP in creating a sizeable cohort of young people on the path to fluency in Mandarin is bringing a wider issue into focus: How do MEP students build on their strong foundations through KS5 and into university?
 - Most of the schools with students in Year 9 and Year 10 aspire to offer some Mandarin course at KS5 where they have sixth-form in the school. The challenge to sustaining the momentum of MEP into KS5 is the very widely held belief among teachers that there is no sensible exams pathway either for students who wish to continue to focus on Mandarin or for those who wish to study it as an adjunct to other subjects. The existing A-level is generally held to be unsuitable and unfair while the Cambridge Pre-U is widely valued, especially for its project orientation, but is being discontinued from 2023.
 - A majority of MEP teachers are very keen for the Pre-U to be repealed but unless it is, many schools remain unsure of what they should offer. One or two are still prepared to offer A-level and the few MEP schools offering IB are considering IB qualifications but most are considering offering HSK 4,5 simply because they see no alternative. The challenge to HSK is that while it is recognised for entry into a university in China it carries no UCAS points and currently has little recognition within UK universities.



2. Introduction: Aims and objectives

- This report, finalised in April 2020, is a second stage evaluation of the Mandarin Excellence Programme (MEP). It builds on an initial evaluation report prepared in March 2019.
- The aim of the evaluation is to assess the impact of MEP to date against its stated aims and objectives and to identify lessons about the implementation, effectiveness and sustainability of MEP within schools. These will feed into the existing evidence base of pedagogical and programme approaches to learning Mandarin Chinese in secondary schools.
- The overall evaluation of MEP was commissioned to address several specific questions:

Support for schools teaching Mandarin:

- What are the challenges for schools in teaching Mandarin and how have they overcome these challenges?
- Is there sufficient support for participating schools from the Mandarin Excellence Programme? Would schools new to Mandarin have taught it without the Programme?

Teaching model and adherence to MEP pedagogy:

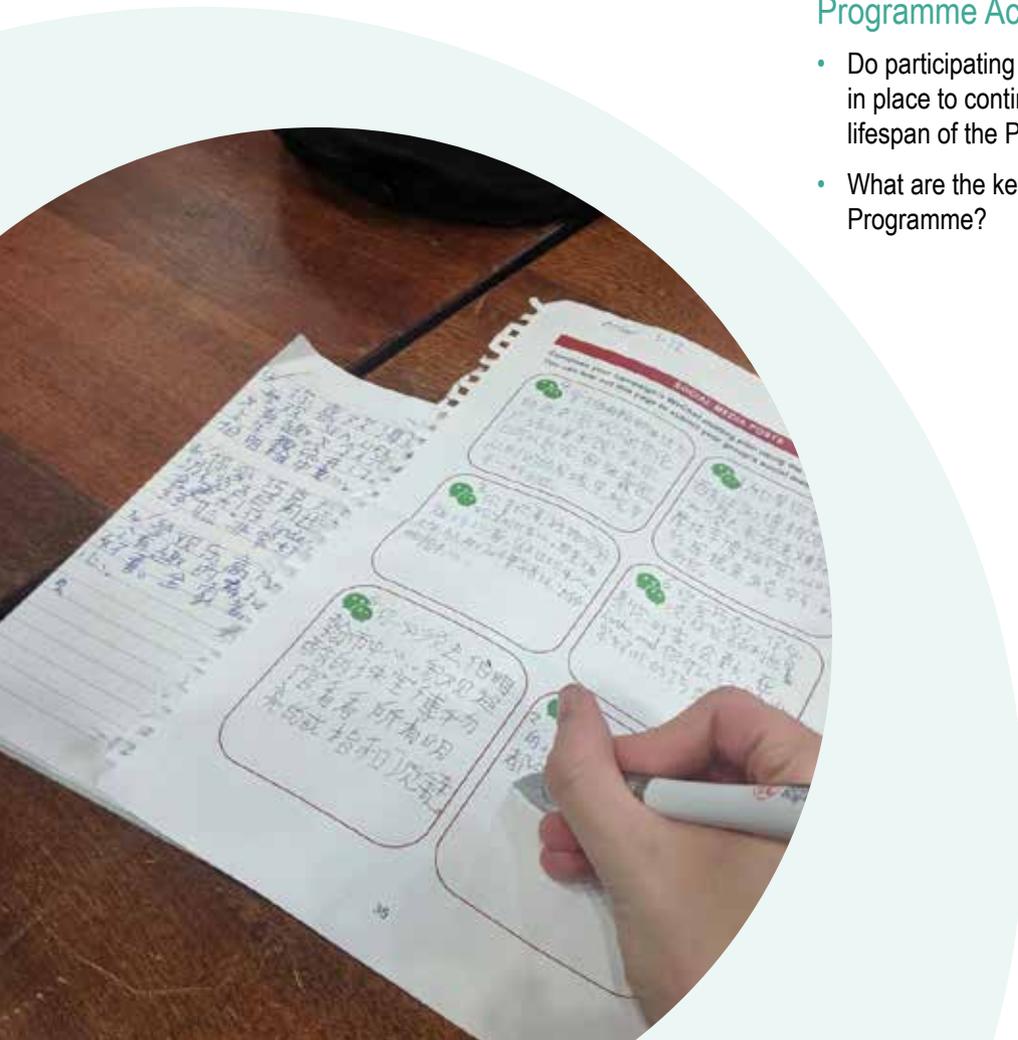
- Are schools following the requirements for 8 hours of study a week (with at least 4 hours of teacher taught classroom time)? How has this approach supported pupil outcomes and which elements of this approach might be useful in supporting the teaching of other subjects?
- How have schools scheduled teacher taught classroom time into their timetable and how have they adapted the remainder of the school timetable to allow for this?
- Which classroom teaching approaches are having the most impact on improving pupil attainment and progression in the subject, for example, whole class teaching, direct instruction and use of textbooks?

Progress of Pupils:

- Are pupils on track to achieve a high level of fluency in Mandarin, this includes being on track for taking HSK4 and HSK5 qualifications, GCSEs and A level (or equivalents), within six years of joining the Programme?

Programme Achievements:

- Do participating schools have sustainable practices in place to continue teaching Mandarin beyond the lifespan of the Programme?
- What are the key barriers and enablers for the Programme?





Case Study 1: Didcot Girls' School



Location: Didcot, Oxfordshire
5 teaching staff involved in MEP
 Joined MEP in 2017/18

Overall, how do you rate the success of MEP at your school so far? “VERY SUCCESSFUL”

School context

- Former language college, now an Academy
- Part of the Ridgeway Education Trust, a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) also incorporating St Birinus Schools for boys
- St Birinus School is also an MEP school
- Girls only school; Didcot Sixth Form College is a collaboration with St Birinus School
- Rated “outstanding” by OFSTED in 2015
- 1229 students in 2019/20
- 4 Languages offered: Mandarin, French, German and Spanish

MEP Journey

- Had offered Mandarin within the curriculum prior to joining MEP in 2017/18
- Joined MEP In 2017/18 as a spoke school of Hub Gumley House School FCJ
- Given its in-house experience and resources is now a Hub school supporting St Gregory’s Catholic College, Bath and Pate’s Grammar School, Cheltenham
- Has also supported and shared resources with St Birinus School within its own MAT; St Birinus entered MEP without prior subject experience
- MEP Cohorts (2019/20): Year 7 (24); Year 8 (27); Year 9 (26)

Role of MEP in the school

- Embeds and strengthens an established role for Mandarin within the school
- Fits with the school’s strong academic reputation and historic focus on languages
- Supports the school’s international focus and its belief in the importance of offering children a global cultural perspective
- The catchment area is diverse and includes many European and international parents working in local research and academic institutions who are attracted to the global importance of Mandarin

Key elements of success so far

- Strong commitment to MEP at both the school and MAT level
- Students are selected into MEP based largely on motivation and commitment
- The school has familiarity with the subject and established in-house teaching resources to draw on
- Teachers are experienced and concentrate on sustaining student motivation and countering the perception that ‘languages are hard’
- Native speaker Hanban teachers support any children who are experiencing challenges through small group sessions at lunchtimes
- The school collaborates with the Confucius Institute at Oxford Brookes University

Impact

- MEP has become a strong USP of the school in the local community
- The intensive nature of MEP has allowed teachers to cover the language in greater depth and also offer a wider cultural and contextual perspective on Mandarin and China
- MEP has reinforced the school-wide drive to adopt modern, interactive teaching approaches maximising the use of new technology
- There has been some cross fertilisation of teaching approaches from MEP into other language classes
- 2019 saw a very successful language and cultural experience for Year 8 pupils attending the Intensive Study Period in Kunming, southern China
- MEP is allowing the school to give opportunities for teaching practice to trainee Mandarin teachers
- Within Ridgeway Education Trust MAT, Didcot Girls’ School staff have been able to support the less experienced St Birinus School in entering the programme and then developing its MEP offer



3. The Mandarin Excellence Programme

- On 20 May 2016 the Secretary of State for Education awarded a contract for the delivery of the Mandarin Excellence Programme in Schools (MEP) to the UCL IOE Confucius Institute for Schools, working with the British Council as a delivery partner. The Programme had an initial investment of £10m to run over a four year period from 2016 to 2020.
- In 2019 funding for MEP was extended for one additional year. The Programme end date is currently March 31st 2021.
- The background to the Programme is that Mandarin Chinese is the most widely spoken language in the world. The growing importance of China globally, not only as an economic power but increasingly as a political and cultural power too, makes Mandarin Chinese unambiguously one of the most important languages for the UK's future.
- Prior to MEP, Mandarin had been taught in only a small number of English state schools and a slightly larger number of independent schools, many of which have a sizeable number of native speaker Chinese students on their school roll.
- The Programme consciously seeks to give motivated pupils within the state sector the opportunity to acquire Mandarin language skills at an early stage, potentially giving them an advantage in their future careers. The headline goal of the Programme on commission was to have at least 5,000 pupils on track for fluency in Mandarin by 2020.
- In establishing the Programme, the aim was to develop a model for delivery and development providing:
 - diverse geographical location of schools to ensure the development of teaching and learning of Mandarin Chinese in schools across the country;
 - school-led development of the Programme, translating centralised guidance and support into local practice;
 - a framework for the sustainability of Mandarin Chinese in England beyond the life of the Programme;
 - an opportunity for schools with strong existing Mandarin Chinese delivery to act as Hubs to implement successfully the step-up of teaching required within the first year of the Programme, and to be able to lead confidently additional new schools in following years;
 - intensive activities for schools, including a residential intensive language study course in China at the end of year 8 for which the Confucius Institute Headquarters (Hanban) provides all the necessary funding support to cover costs associated with teaching, accommodation, food and in-China travel and activities;
 - a high quality online environment to provide resources;
 - development of teaching capacity and expansion of the provision of ITE places;
 - a communications plan and strategy;
 - stakeholder engagement to build demand.
- In order to participate in MEP, schools need to have an Ofsted rating of Good or Outstanding and be able to select a minimum cohort of 20 children into the Programme. Participating schools receive £20K core funding plus extra per-student payments reflecting student retention year-on-year and levels of participation in the Year 8 Intensive Study Period in China.
- The Programme developed for schools starts in Year 7 and allows selected students to study eight hours of Mandarin Chinese every week, including a minimum of four hours of classroom-taught, F2F lessons supplemented by four hours of guided self study outside the curriculum.
- Throughout the Programme the UCL IOE Confucius Institute for Schools provides significant practical and pedagogical support to participating schools, including support with curriculum development, teaching resources and teaching practice. The Institute also hosts termly meetings for both teachers and school Heads involved in the Programme.
- The fourteen schools recruited into the Programme in the first cohort (2016/2017) were already experienced in teaching Mandarin and were designated as Hub Schools. These schools were chosen to act as local centres of excellence. Schools recruited in subsequent cohorts have been assigned to a Hub School (based primarily on geography) in order to receive support and guidance in getting the Programme up and running. As the Programme has expanded, a further 9 schools in which MEP has been running successfully have been designated Hub schools to support the further expansion in school numbers.

- An important component of the Programme for language and wider cultural learning is a two weeks intensive study period in China for Year 8 students, organised by the British Council and UCL IOE Confucius Institute for Schools.
- The focus of the intensive study period is the development of students' language ability and confidence by allowing them to study, to experience China and to practice their acquired language skills in a native speaker environment. The course consists of intensive linguistic and cultural activities, including 40 hours of intensive language study per visit.
- Teaching during the intensive study period is delivered by teachers from the host institution in China. These teachers themselves receive training in advance of the study period from specialist trainers from the IOE Confucius Institute for Schools who spend time during Spring of each year at the institutions in China aligning the teaching content and practice to the wider model developed within the Programme. The costs of accommodation, local teaching and cultural activities in China are paid for by Hanban and the DfE subsidises flight costs by £350 per pupil leaving the remaining costs of visas and incidental expenses to be paid for by parents or the school.
- At the end of Year 9, students also attend a one week intensive study period at a university campus in the UK which is currently Nottingham University. The week gives students the opportunity to meet fellow learners, reinforce their learning to date and look at future career paths and opportunities with Mandarin.
- In the summer term of academic Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils sit Hurdle tests specially-created by the IOE Confucius Institute for Schools to track their progress in the four key skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening.
- Pupils are targeted to take HSK 3 (instead of a specially created Hurdle test) at the end of Year 10 and GCSE in Mandarin at the end of Year 11 alongside their other GCSEs.
- HSK is an exam administered by the Chinese Testing International Co., Ltd. (CTI) and sponsored by Hanban. It assesses non-native Chinese speakers' abilities in using the Chinese language in their daily, academic and professional lives and consists of six levels. HSK 3 corresponds to level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF). According to the Hanban website (www.english.hanban.org),

“ Test takers who are able to pass the HSK (Level III) can communicate in Chinese at a basic level in their daily, academic and professional lives. They can manage most communication in Chinese when travelling in China. ”

- An important parallel aim of the DfE and UCL IOE Confucius Institute for Schools is to boost the supply of qualified Mandarin teachers by increasing the number of teachers gaining qualified teacher status through the UCL IOE Mandarin Chinese PGCE, for which the Mandarin specific element is delivered by specialists from IOE CI. The MEP Programme is seen to have an important role to play by boosting the number of schools in which trainee Mandarin teachers can gain experience and fulfill their teaching practice requirements.
- At the time of this report (April 2020), the 2020 intensive study period in China planned for Year 8 MEP students has had to be postponed as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, as has the UK study period at Nottingham University for Year 9s. Discussions about re-timetabling these and the exact shape of the Programme in 2020/21 are ongoing.



Case Study 2: Pate's Grammar School



Location: Cheltenham, Gloucestershire
2 teaching staff involved in MEP
 Joined MEP in 2018/2019

Overall, how do you rate the success of MEP at your school so far? “SUCCESSFUL”

School context

- Co-ed Grammar school
- 1,102 pupils in 2018/19
- Rated outstanding in all categories in last OFSTED report
- One of the leading state secondary schools in the country with very strong academic results attracting talented students from a large geographic area including as far as Bristol
- Twice awarded The Sunday Times State Secondary School of the Year (2012, 2020)
- Particularly strong in STEM and Modern Foreign Languages; 4 Languages offered in the curriculum: Mandarin, French, German and Spanish
- Nearly all students take at least one language at GCSE

MEP Journey

- Had previously offered Mandarin on the curriculum but had not been able to sustain it
- Joining MEP in 2018/19 allowed the school to reinstate Mandarin learning in the school
- MEP Cohorts (2019/20): Year 7 (38); Year 8 (36)

Role of MEP in the school

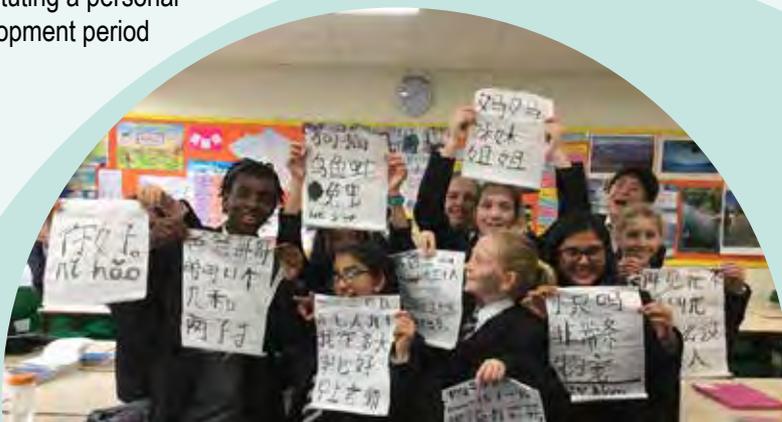
- Year 7 pupils can take 2 languages from Mandarin as part of MEP, French or German; Spanish is an option in Year 9
- Parents and students have a free choice to enrol in MEP and the option to change to a different language at the first half-term – but very few do so
- The wide geographic catchment area and long travel times makes after-school classes a challenge so the extra MEP hours are made up with lunchtime classes and by substituting a personal development period

Key elements of success so far

- An in-school legacy of Mandarin teaching upon which to draw
- Experienced teacher with extensive set of existing resources and material
- Work closely with parents to monitor use of out of curriculum hours and to ensure student time is being used effectively
- Learning is consolidated through extra intensive learning days
- Headteacher participates in UCL IOE Confucius Institute for Schools' meetings

Impact

- MEP provided the necessary impetus and resources to re-establish Mandarin in the curriculum
- MEP fits well alongside the school's commitment to nurture citizens of the world, part of an international community in which the study of languages and culture flourishes
 - *“We are giving you a global skill, the language that you are able to hopefully use purposefully in the real world. Even if you stop at year 11 at that point you should have enough transactional language to be able to function”*
- MEP adds to the attraction of Pate's Grammar School for prospective parents
- Mandarin teacher also supports Mandarin classes in a local community school which is not part of MEP
- MEP enhances engagement between the school and the wider community through the organisation of cultural events



4. Methodology

- This evaluation report is based on two waves of data collection; the first wave of research conducted during 2018/19 and the second during the 2019/20 academic year.
- Across the two field-work periods, data was collected through 5 complementary areas of work.
- **1) Structured interviews with Programme stakeholders** including at the UCL IOE Confucius Institute for Schools and the British Council.
- **2) Analysis of background documentation and Management Information (MI) data** provided by the UCL IOE Confucius Institute for Schools including summaries of Hurdle tests results and teaching hours delivered in MEP schools.
- **3) Scoping visits to fourteen MEP schools.** The schools were chosen to reflect a mix of Hub and Spoke schools, locations and socio-economic catchment areas.
 - Anglo European School (Nr Chelmsford, Essex)
 - Christ College Finchley (North London)
 - Melbourn Village College (Nr Cambridge)
 - Queen Mary's Grammar School (Walsall)
 - The Crossley Heath School (Halifax)
 - Didcot Girls' School (Didcot)
 - Ratton School (Eastbourne)
 - Homewood School & Sixth Form Centre (Tenterden)
 - Pinner High School (NW London)
 - Finham Park School (Coventry)
 - Lyng Hall School (Coventry)
 - Shevington High School (Wigan)
 - Pate's Grammar School (Cheltenham)
 - The Grey Court School (SW London)
- During the scoping visits interviews were conducted with relevant school stakeholders including teaching staff, headteachers, administrators and Hanban assistants. In total, formal or informal discussions were held with 47 staff across these fourteen schools.
- At each of the schools visited, at least one MEP lesson was observed and across the fourteen schools 19 classroom lessons in total have been observed. A number of small focus group discussions were also held with participating students as well as informal conversations with many individual students.
- A learning from the first wave of field work was that F2F scoping visits to schools are particularly valuable in providing insight into the implementation and success of the Programme. As a result, the five scoping visits undertaken in Wave 1 were increased to nine for Wave 2. The scoping visits undertaken during the second field-work period form the basis for the case studies developed in this report.
- **4) An online survey** distributed via the UCL IOE Confucius Institute for Schools to relevant staff including MEP teachers, school heads and other school leaders in all participating MEP schools. The survey was a mix of quantitative (closed) questions with some open ended questions for opinions and free response.
- In wave one, 129 staff responded at least in part and 103 fully completed the online survey. At least one response was received from 63 of 64 schools within the Programme at that time. In wave two, 115 staff responded at least in part and 86 fully completed the online survey. At least one response was received from 72 of 76 schools within the Programme at that time.

- 5) Follow-up in-depth telephone interviews** approximately 45 minutes long were undertaken with 23 staff from a further 15 MEP schools in Wave 1 and with 13 staff from 12 schools in Wave 2. Respondents spanned different roles – including headteachers, MEP teachers, heads of department and a small number of classroom assistants. Respondents were selected for interview in part based on their responses to the online survey and also to reflect a diversity of school contexts.
- The scope of data collection across the two waves is summarised in Table 1 below. The coverage of schools and relevant staff gives us confidence that the findings are robust and reflect well the status and impact of the whole Mandarin Excellence Programme.

Table 1: Summary of responses by data collection method

	Evaluation Wave 1			Evaluation Wave 2		
	No. school scoping visits	No. of telephone interviews	No. survey	No. school scoping visits	No. of telephone interviews	No. survey
Schools from cohort 1 (2016/17)	2	7	33	2	3	23
Schools from cohort 2 (2017/18)	3	10	41	3	5	30
Schools from cohort 3 (2018/19)	0	6	43	2	4	29
Schools from cohort 4 (2019/20)	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	1	17
Not specified	N/A	N/A	12	N/A	N/A	16
Total	5	23	129	9	13	115





Case Study 3: Shevington High School



Location: Outskirts of Wigan, Lancashire
1 teaching staff involved in MEP
 Joined MEP in 2017/2018

Overall, how do you rate the success of MEP at your school so far? “VERY SUCCESSFUL”

School context

- Community school
- 732 students in 2018/19 of which 17% are Pupil Premium
- Co-educational age range 11-16
- Predominantly white British catchment area which is geographically large
- Rated “Good” by OFSTED in 2017
- International outlook and existing connections including through Kunskapsskolan Education (KED) / SAIL involving an annual exchange trip to Sweden
- 3 Modern Foreign Languages offered: Mandarin, French and Spanish

MEP Journey

- Had previously taught Mandarin before joining MEP in 2017/2018
- The only school offering Mandarin in the surrounding area
- 2017/18 Hub school: Upton Hall School FCJ; 2018/19 Hub school: Cowley International College
- MEP Cohorts (2019/20): Year 7 (28); Year 8 (25); Year 9 (16)

Role of MEP in the school

- MEP is communicated to prospective parents during open days as an important opportunity but one requiring commitment from pupils and parents
- Pupils are selected for MEP based primarily on their motivation and feedback/grades from primary schools
- MEP classes run in parallel to non-MEP Mandarin classes in Year 7

Key elements of success so far

- Aligns to the school's established international outlook
- Builds on strong parental engagement and interest in MEP; the school approach is that both students and parents are part of MEP
- Highly inclusive teaching approach, seeking to maximise whole classroom engagement
- Careful monitoring of out of curriculum workload to ensure students don't become overloaded
- The opportunity of the Intensive Study Period in China in Year 8 is a major motivator

Impact

- MEP is seen as a USP for the school in the local area, helping to grow student numbers
- MEP helps support the mission of broadening students' horizons and boosting their motivation and aspirations
- The Programme is strengthening the relationship between the school and parents
- The Intensive Study period in China for Year 8s was a great success; for some children it was their first ever trip outside the UK
- Extra-curricular events and activities about China are staged for the whole school, not just for MEP pupils
- MEP has given the sole Mandarin teacher better access to a shared community of practice and support, given that the school is relatively far from any other school offering Mandarin



5. Status of the Mandarin Excellence Programme

- As of March 2020, seventy-six schools in England were participating in the Mandarin Excellence Programme (Table 2).
- Fourteen Hub schools were recruited in the first academic year 2016/2017 alongside one other school, Archbishop Sentamu Academy, which delivered the Programme but did not receive funding as result of concerns about a decline in its Ofsted rating. Archbishop Sentamu Academy formally joined the Programme in 2018/2019 and its students in Year 8 and Year 9 took Hurdle Tests in summer term 2019.

Table 2: Number of schools delivering MEP by year of joining the Programme

Academic Year	Schools joining MEP	Schools leaving MEP	Cumulative No. Schools delivering MEP
2016/2017	14		14
2017/2018	24		38
2018/2019	26		64
2019/2020	13	1	76
Total	77	1	76

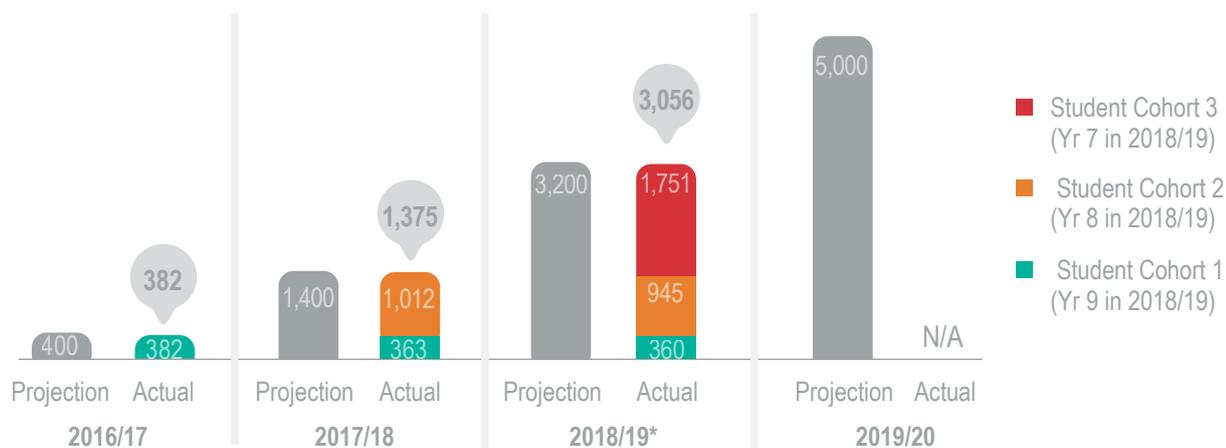
- A further 23 schools joined in 2017/2018, 26 in the academic year 2018/2019 and another 13 schools in 2019/20.
- One school, Ingleby Manor Free School, which joined the Programme in 2017/2018 left the Programme in 2019/2020.
- As the Programme has expanded, the number of Hub schools has been increased to a total of 23.
- Additional roll-over funding to March 2021 is designed to keep the Programme effectively in a steady state. No further schools will be recruited into the Programme during the 2020/2021 academic year. One school, The International Academy of Greenwich, which joined in 2019/2020 is closing down, so going forward there will be 75 schools in total in the Programme.
- In 2018/19 it was estimated that seventy-one schools would be required to achieve the target number of 5,000 children on track for fluency. Net school recruitment has therefore exceeded expectations by 5 schools.
- The requirement for MEP schools is that the initial Year 7 student cohort should be a minimum size of 20. Based on the Hurdle test results for 2019, the smallest school cohort (excluding Ingleby Manor which had very low numbers) was 13 and the largest 60, corresponding, typically, to one or two classes per school year. The mean school cohort size is 28 (again excluding Ingleby Manor).
- The original planning projections for numbers of children entering the Programme envisaged a relatively small initial cohort (400) of Year 7s in 2016/2017 (an average of 29 per participating school) who would then move through with the Programme to take GCSE Mandarin in Year 11 in Summer term 2021.
- In the event, the 382 students taking the first round of Hurdle tests for Year 7s in 2016/2017 across the fourteen schools in the Programme at that time was slightly below (5%) the initial planning target of 400.
- The number of students from this first group of schools subsequently taking the year 8 Hurdle test in 2017/2018 was 363, a yr-on-yr drop-out rate of 5% while an almost identical 360 took the first Year 9 test in summer term 2018/2019. However, these 360 students came from 15 schools (with the addition of 20 students from Archbishop Sentamu Academy) rather than the original 14. On a like-for-like basis across the original 14 schools, 340 students took the Year 9 Hurdle test, representing a further drop-out rate of 6% of students vs 2017/2018.

- The original 2016/2017 cohort comprised Hub schools, enrolled because of their existing experience with the Teaching and Learning of Mandarin. So an instructive comparison is the drop-off rate among students within the second group of schools which came into the Programme in 2017/2018 and which, in the majority of cases, had no prior experience with the subject. In their first year in the Programme, 614 students took Year 7 Hurdle tests across these schools and that number had fallen by 8% to 562 for the first Year 8 Hurdle tests in 2018/2019.
- It is possible that a small number of individual children have been substituted within the Programme over the two years and a handful may have followed the Programme but not have been entered for the tests but the data suggests that out of a typical MEP school cohort of 28 one or two students drop out each year. And this accords with anecdotal feedback from schools and teachers themselves during our scoping visits.
- MEP is clearly a demanding course for students in terms of time commitment and content and an annual drop-out rate of 5%-10% is probably to be expected. When students do drop out it is typically because there is a joint assessment by parents and teachers that they are not able to make the necessary commitment of time, they are experiencing difficulties in other areas of the curriculum which themselves require more time or families relocate, withdrawing their children from the school.
- Some schools within the Programme start KS4 in Year 9 but the majority do so in Year 10. An important marker of retention will be numbers for the first student cohort from 2016/2017 taking HSK 3 in Summer term 2020 (subject to the impact of the Coronavirus), four years after starting within MEP. At this stage, all of these students will be within KS4 and the number of test takers will provide a better indication of how Mandarin delivered through MEP fits with students' wider GCSE choices.
- We also noted in our first report that the probability of some small natural decline in student cohort participation over time was not taken into account when initial planning assumptions for participation numbers were made. However, there has been over-recruitment of schools vs the original projections and some increase in average cohort size within schools over time. The size of the Year 7 cohorts taking Hurdle tests in the original 14 Hub schools has risen from 382 in 2016/2017 to 407 in 2018/2019 (+7%).
- As a result, MEP remains on-track within 5% against its initial student planning projections to the end of the 2018/2019 academic year (Chart 1).
- An estimated 2,000 Year 7 students were recruited into the Programme in the 2019/20 academic year which should allow MEP to achieve its original target of 5,000 participating students within four years.
- For 2020/21, recruitment will be considered to be in a 'steady state' which means that the number of MEP schools will remain at 75 with a similar intake of Year 7 students in September 2020 – so around 2,000 more, taking total participation in the Programme up to around 7,000 students.

Chart 1 – Growth in Student Numbers within the Mandarin Excellence Programme

Number of Students within MEP (planning projections and actual number taking hurdle tests)

By academic year and student cohort



Source: MEP Hurdle test results 2017, 2018, 2019; UCL IOE data; Analysis by Research Stories

*Note: Student Cohort 1 includes an additional 20 students in 2018/19 from Archbishop Sentamu Academy; Student Cohort 2 includes an additional 8 students in 2018/19 from Archbishop Sentamu Academy

- A very visible and important part of the Programme is the Intensive Study Period in China organised by the British Council in partnership with UCL IOE Confucius Institute for Schools and undertaken by Year 8 pupils within MEP.
- The first Year 8 cohort of 363 pupils participated in the Study Period in Summer 2018. The 2019 Intensive Study Period in China involved 822 children and 103 teachers and took place during a 2 week period between the 2nd and 19th July 2019. The host cities for the Programme in 2019 were expanded to include Beijing, Chengdu, Kunming, Jinan, Shanghai, Shenyang and Xi'an.
- In summer 2019 all MEP pupils in Year 9 participated in a residential intensive study course running from Monday 24th June to Thursday 27th June at the University of Nottingham.
- Various hub events have also been organised during the Programme. For example, two events in 2019 were organised by the University of Leeds to bring together the northern MEP schools and give their students some additional study time together.





Case Study 4: Pinner High School

PINNER
HIGH SCHOOL

Location: Harrow, NW London
2 teaching staff involved in MEP
Joined MEP in 2019/20

Overall, how do you rate the success of MEP at your school so far? “VERY SUCCESSFUL”

School context

- New school founded in 2016; formally part of the Harrow Academies Trust and supported by other established local schools
- Age Range: 11 – 16; 495 students in 2019/20 and growing quickly
- Prides itself on serving the needs of the local community which is highly diverse, including many families with South Asian heritage and a non-English home language
- Puts great emphasis on inclusion, with a high share of SEN pupils and provision for 12 children on the Autistic Spectrum
- Rated ‘Outstanding’ by OFSTED in all categories in May 2019
- 2 Languages offered in the curriculum: Mandarin and Spanish
- Mandarin and Spanish seen as key languages for young people in the 21st Century
 - “.....Mandarin and Spanish are about job seekers of the 2020s”

MEP Journey

- All Year 7 and 8 students take at least one lesson in Mandarin as well as Spanish
- Joined MEP in 2019/20 allowing students in the Programme to follow a far more intensive Mandarin course
- MEP Cohort (2019/20): Year 7 (27)

Role of MEP in the school

- MEP is allowing the school to embed its existing commitment to Mandarin
- Supports the international outlook of the school and responds to the diversity of the local community
- Mandarin teachers at Pinner High School support three other schools in Mandarin and offer Year 6 classes in some local primary schools

Key elements of success so far

- Strong school commitment to an international outlook; the Head has lived and worked internationally, including in Beijing
- One of the school’s Mandarin teachers has undertaken her teaching practice at another MEP school – so has familiarity and prior experience with the Programme
- School outreach in Mandarin to local primary schools means that motivated children are already prepared to enter an intensive programme like MEP in Year 7 on joining Pinner High School
- Accesses resources and networking support from UCL IOE Confucius Institute for Schools

Impact

- MEP made it possible for the school to increase significantly the hours of Mandarin teaching in curriculum
 - *MEP makes a huge difference to the sustainability [of Mandarin] in the school”*
- MEP reinforces the school’s message that a commitment to inclusivity does not preclude striving for excellence
 - *“MEP appeals to bright young people and helps to stretch the most able”*
- MEP is a challenge that young people are motivated to embrace, *“It is meaningful”*
- MEP supports the school’s goal of creating active citizens equipped for a globalised world
 - *“If we want active citizens of the 2020s to go out and make a contribution to society and the world than we need to give them the tools to do it...Mandarin is one of those tools and MEP is a way of doing it even better...the students will leave school proficient in Mandarin. That is amazing!”*



6. Would schools new to Mandarin have taught it without the Programme?

- In our previous report we noted that of the 50 non-Hub schools which have joined MEP in cohorts 2 and 3, at least 26 had not previously taught Mandarin within the curriculum, although a small number had previously offered some form of non-curriculum Mandarin, through, for example, lunchtime conversation classes.
- Of the thirteen new schools which joined MEP in 2019/20 we know that at least 10 had not previously taught Mandarin. So to date, excluding the original Hub schools, at least two thirds of the schools in the Programme had not previously taught Mandarin. In simple terms the Programme is succeeding in expanding the availability of Mandarin teaching and learning within the state sector.
- Feedback from the second MEP staff survey continues to show that a desire to introduce and establish Mandarin on the curriculum is a key motivator for schools to join the Programme. Two-thirds of staff respondents from schools which joined after the first 2016/17 cohort of Hub schools say that introducing Mandarin on the curriculum was a key motivation (Chart 2).

“ [The] MEP programme is a good programme for schools if they want to make a start to teaching Mandarin, and the MEP team do give teachers and schools a lot of support. I would strongly recommend this programme to other schools that are interested in delivering Mandarin.

Teacher

[MEP is an] Excellent opportunity for schools to develop an additional modern language that will be vital in the future economic climate. Good support from IOE Confucius London. Good network for resources.

Headteacher/School leader

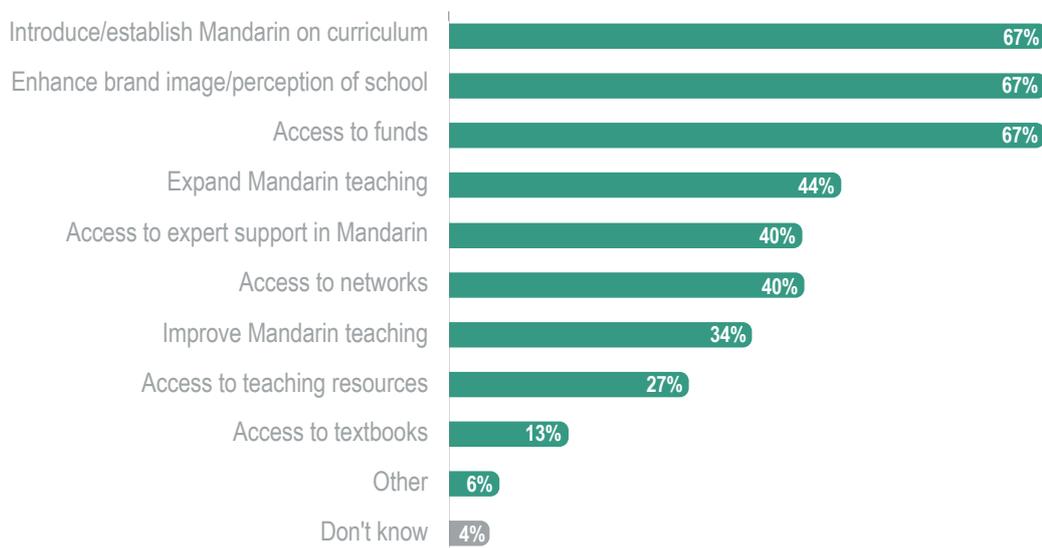
.....I think because of MEP the situation has changed but in the past Mandarin was rather more present in the independent sector than in the public [state] sector.

Teacher

Chart 2 – Establishing Mandarin on the curriculum is a key motivation for schools which joined MEP after the initial cohort of Hub Schools

Which of the following were important motivations for your school to join MEP?

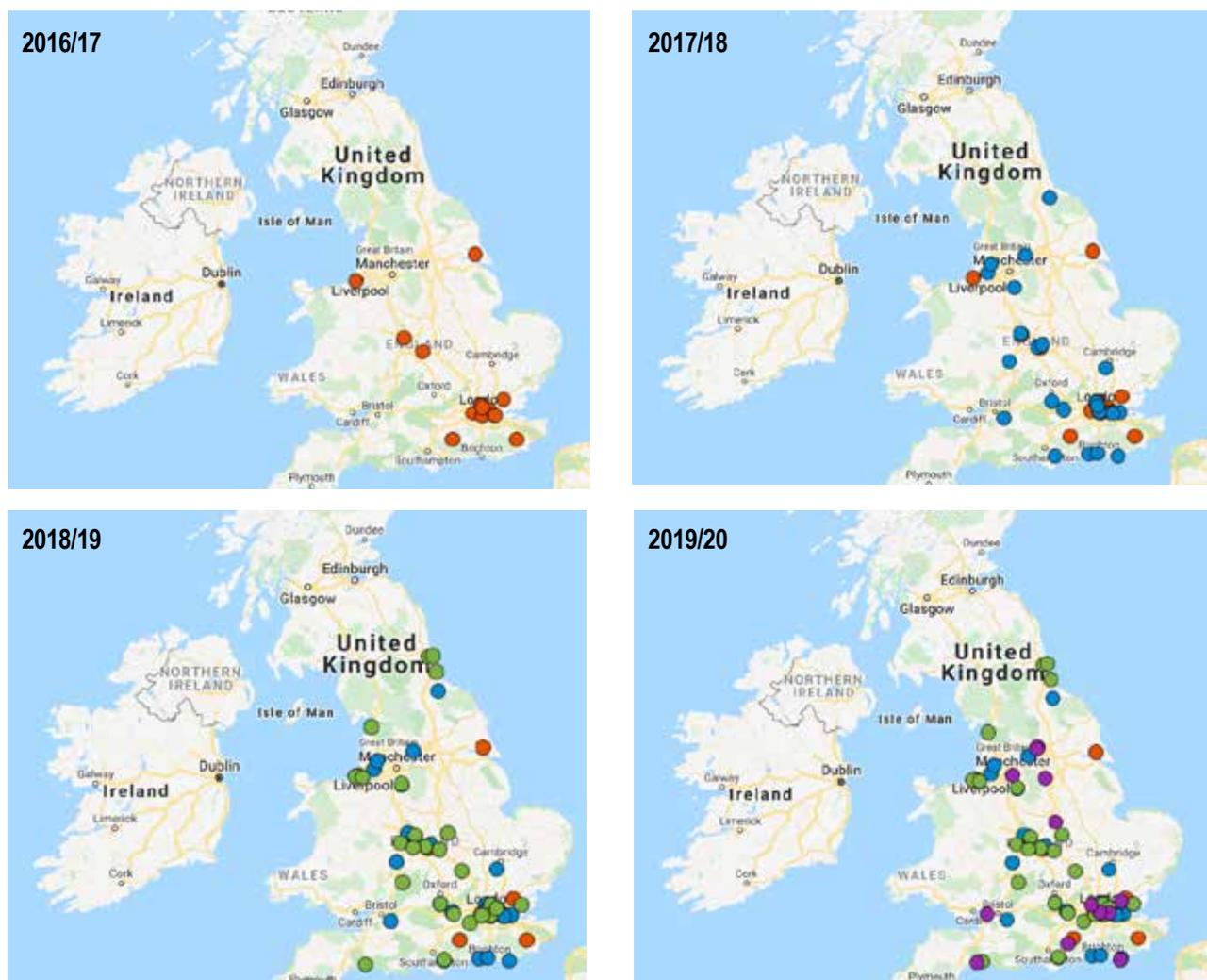
Respondents from schools joining MEP in 2017, 2018, 2019



Source: MEP Staff Survey 2019/20, Fieldwork and analysis by Research Stories
Base: All staff involved in MEP (70)

- A similar proportion of respondents cite access to funds and a belief that the Programme will enhance the school's brand image as major motivations for joining.
- It remains true that most schools joining the Programme have an underlying ethos which not only aspires to excellence across the curriculum but also prioritises internationalisation and preparing their children for work in a globalised world. Where schools are part of a Multi Academy Trust (MAT) that aspiration and ethos is invariably reflected in the mission of the MAT as well.
- The teaching and learning of Mandarin delivered through MEP is then seen as a natural fit with this underlying ethos. Many MEP schools already participate in the International School Awards (ISA) Programme run by the British Council or have existing bi-lateral links or international exchange programmes. Twenty-three of the 72 schools (32%) which responded to our survey were already Confucius Classrooms, a global initiative of the Chinese Ministry of Education, before joining the Programme.
- As the number of schools joining the Programme has increased, the nationwide spread has increased and the geographic clustering of schools, predominantly in the main population centres of the country, has become more apparent.
- The first cohort of Hub schools which had an established track record in the teaching of Mandarin was heavily concentrated in London and the South East. Successive cohorts have been successful in widening the geographic coverage and there are now clear clusters of MEP schools in the population centres of the West Midlands, North West and North East, with further smaller clusters established along the South Coast around Brighton, along the Thames and M4 corridors towards Oxford and Bristol and through Hampshire towards Southampton (Chart 3).

Chart 3 – The distribution of schools within the Mandarin Excellence Programme



<https://ci.ioe.ac.uk/mandarin-excellence-programme/mep-schools/>

- This clustering is a function of a number of factors. To some extent it reflects simple population and school density; it is where most schools are. It also reflects in part the difficulties in sourcing a Mandarin teacher. Sourcing teachers is difficult for many schools but it is relatively easier in major conurbations with Chinese diaspora communities and easy access to university networks of both native and non-native speaker teachers.
- The clustering also reflects local awareness creation through formal and informal teaching networks which is itself evidenced through the Programme's Hub and Spoke delivery model. With most Hub schools located in major cities and towns, it makes sense for both the Hub and the Spoke schools that they are geographically close. This not only makes it cheaper and more time efficient for staff and students to meet occasionally but also means that the Hub schools are more likely to be familiar with the context of their Spoke schools and more able to provide appropriate support.
- As successive MEP cohorts have developed, a very important dynamic to emerge on top of this Hub and Spoke model has been the role of MATs in driving recruitment into the Programme.
- To the extent that MATs are about providing a common ethos and set of standards across a number of schools this makes perfect sense. The same factors that attract one school in a MAT to MEP are also likely to attract its sister schools. Initial school experience with MEP will have been shared within the MAT and there is a potential efficiency gain when multiple schools within a MAT are within the Programme and each able to access funding.
- The evolution of several clusters of MEP schools exemplify these dynamics:
 - **Finham Park School**, an original MEP Hub School, is one of the highest performing state schools in Coventry, West Midlands. It has a specialism in STEM including links through STEM projects to schools in Shanghai and has long been closely connected to its local business community which has a strong engineering and automotive heritage and close links to major manufacturers in South and East Asia. The school is already very internationally focused: it has been a British Council accredited International School since 2010 and is one of six schools in England accredited as a World Class School. It was winner of the Global Confucius Classroom Award in 2017.
 - **Finham Park** is the lead school within the Finham Park MAT whose stated mission is offering a 'world class education'. Under the guidance of Finham Park, two further schools in Coventry within the MAT - Finham Park 2 and Lyng Hall - joined MEP in 2017/2018. In 2018/2019 two further schools which are local but outside the Finham Park MAT – West Coventry Academy and Rugby Free School – joined MEP as additional spoke schools. So, Coventry, a city of approximately 350K people now has four schools within MEP and a fifth school is in Rugby about 12 miles away.
 - **Bohunt School in Liphook**, Hampshire is the lead school within the Bohunt Education Trust MAT. It was an MEP foundation Hub school in 2016/2017. It is a large school with a heritage as a specialist language college which prides itself both on its international outlook and commitment to innovation, including the championing of an immersive approach to language learning. It is a British Council ISA school and was awarded TES Overall School and Secondary School of the Year at the TES Awards in 2014. In 2015 it participated in 'The Bohunt Chinese School', an experiment broadcast by the BBC in which 50 Year 9 students at the school were educated by Chinese teachers using traditional Chinese teaching methods for a period of four weeks.
 - In 2017/2018 a second school within the Bohunt MAT joined MEP. Bohunt School Worthing is a new comprehensive school opened in 2015 and is about 35 miles from Liphook on the south coast. In 2018/2019 a third school within the MAT joined the Programme. The Petersfield School is about 10 miles from Liphook.
 - **St Wilfrid's Roman Catholic College in South Shields** joined MEP in 2018/2019. It is a faith school with a strong commitment to excellence which is the founding school of a local MAT, recently renamed the Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust.
 - Catholic schools in the area already had strong links through the local diocese and St Joseph's Catholic Academy in Hebburn outside Newcastle, about 5 miles away, joined MEP in the same 2018/2019 cohort before coming together with St Wilfrid's in the MAT in May 2019. A third catholic school, St Bede's Catholic Comprehensive School, is in Peterlee on the coast of County Durham 20 miles south. St Bede's already works in close partnership with St Wilfrid's and is likely to join the MAT formally in the near future. It also joined MEP in the same 2018/2019 cohort.

- Didcot Girls' School and St Birinus School in Didcot and Lambeth Academy and Hurlingham Academy in London are further examples of local schools within a MAT both joining MEP.
- An entry requirement to the Programme is an OFSTED rating of Good or Outstanding. Thirteen MEP schools are grammar schools (17% vs 5% nationally) and a relatively high share are faith schools. A significant number of participating schools could reasonably lay claim to be among the academically top performing state schools in the country. Many others are at the very least academic leaders in their local area.
- This natural skew towards high performing schools means that there is an equally natural skew towards parents and children from relatively affluent areas and professional backgrounds; the same skew which surrounds high performing schools in general.

“ The parents here have high aspirations for their children and many work in companies which have branches in China so they see its [MEP's] importance for the future.

Teacher

We are a very successful academic school and it [MEP] provides for a need and desire for our pupils. Our parents value the breadth of the curriculum and we delight in giving our pupils the best opportunities.

Headteacher/School leader

- The concentration of MEP schools in an around London and the major conurbations also means that many participating schools have large proportions of children from minority ethnic backgrounds and this ethnic diversity is immediately apparent through observation of MEP classes during scoping visits.

“ As a central area in England and multinational city, it is important for students to access different culture.

Teacher

- As one example, Pinner High School is a new school founded in 2016 to serve the local community in the London Borough of Harrow. It joined MEP in 2019/2020 under the leadership of a Head with a strong commitment to both excellence and internationalisation, himself having spent many years

working internationally, including in China. The 2011 census for the local area showed that nearly 50% of local residents have a non-British heritage. Heathrow Airport is a major local employer. This local diversity is immediately apparent in the MEP classes. The international heritage of many of the children, their frequent exposure at home to languages other than English and the importance of global trade to the local economy all combine to make MEP attractive to both the school and the local community.

- Although in the minority, there are several schools which have embraced MEP successfully while serving communities which are relatively deprived. These schools are equally Good or Outstanding schools as assessed by OFSTED. In our 2019 report we mentioned the examples of Melbourn Village College, a small secondary school in rural Cambridgeshire and Cowley International College in the North West, both of which serve majority white British school communities with relatively high levels of deprivation. Shevington School on the outskirts of Wigan is another example of a relatively small community school within MEP which serves a predominantly white British community in a post-industrial context. In all of these schools an important role of MEP is seen to be its ability to raise the expectations and widen the horizons – literally and metaphorically - of both students and parents.

“ In my catchment area, there are lots of disadvantaged kids, whose knowledge of China is kongfu and fried chicken. I believe MEP program will help to open doors for some of those students, as well building a bridge of understanding and peace.

Headteacher/School leader

It [MEP] increases the cultural capital and global understanding in an area of the country where people often don't experience anything beyond our peninsula.

Headteacher/School leader

In our area of social deprivation, the MEP offers life-changing opportunities.

Headteacher/School leader

- Similar dynamics also apply to schools such as Lyng Hall School in Coventry or UCL Academy in Swiss Cottage London. Both have catchment areas with high levels of deprivation and also high levels of diversity. Lyng Hall serves a local community which is not only among the ten most economically deprived in the country but also highly diverse with 60% of students in receipt of pupil premium funding and an estimated two-thirds of students speaking a language other than English at home. Within the school, MEP is seen to play a similar role of raising aspirations and expectations while at the same time affording students opportunities to mix and participate on an equal footing with children from other backgrounds. And to show that given the opportunities, students at schools such as Lyng Hall can perform equally well if not better than their peers elsewhere.
- Some have relatively recently become academies with a new outlook and ambition, some are start-ups with a relatively blank piece of paper on which to design a curriculum and many others are part of a MAT whose overarching mission and ethos might also eventually have led naturally to the introduction of Mandarin at some point. For many, and quite possibly most schools which have joined MEP over the last three years, Mandarin was therefore already somewhere on the future agenda, albeit often vaguely and with no fixed timetable in mind.
- So the key word is eventually. In the absence of MEP the process of adoption might have eventually happened but it might well have taken another 5-10 years or maybe more in some cases. MEP is best seen as a catalyst and dramatic accelerator of the uptake of Mandarin in the England state sector rather than the sole reason for adoption. The availability of the Programme and the financial and teaching support it offers has helped translate relatively quickly an often vague vision or aspiration held by school leaders into the delivery of an intensive high quality course within 76 state schools.
- And in the absence of MEP the introduction of Mandarin onto the curriculum might well have involved smaller cohort groups, been less successful or taken considerably longer to develop.

“ We don't want to do things by half.....MEP is an outrageous opportunity.

Headteacher/School leader

I believe our students should feel able to be on a par with the best nationally and the MEP is the sort of programme which allows them to feel like this.

Headteacher/School leader

- Our broad conclusion remains as it was last year that it is difficult to argue that most schools within MEP would never have introduced Mandarin onto their curriculum had the Programme not existed. As we have discussed above, many of the participating schools are academically ambitious and high performing and these may well have looked to offer a Mandarin option eventually in order to remain academically relevant and responsive to the demands of globalisation.





Case Study 5: Finham Park School



Location: Coventry, West Midlands

3 teaching staff involved in MEP

Joined MEP in 2016/17; Confucius Classroom School

Overall, how do you rate the success of MEP at your school so far? “VERY SUCCESSFUL”

School context

- A comprehensive school that became an Academy in 2011 and is now the lead school in the Finham Park Multi Academy Trust (MAT)
- The MAT is comprised of two local primary schools and two other secondary schools in Coventry, Finham Park 2 and Lyng Hall, both of which are now also schools within MEP
- A school with a strong academic reputation in its local community and heavily oversubscribed
- Finham Park has a specialism in Maths and STEM including links through STEM projects to schools in Shanghai
- 4 Languages offered: Mandarin, French, German and Spanish
- 1,519 students in 2018/19

MEP Journey

- Regards itself as pioneer school in England for the teaching of Mandarin and became a founding Hub school for MEP in 2016/2017
- Winner of the Global Confucius Classroom Award in 2017
- As part of the Year 7 and 8 enrichment programme, all students in Years 7 and 8 take two 12 week modules in Mandarin and Chinese culture
- Offers a biennial trip to China for all students

Role of MEP in the school

- The school is already very internationally focused: it has been a British Council accredited International School since 2010 and is one of six schools in England accredited as a World Class School. Offering a ‘world class education’ is the mission of both the school and its parent MAT
- MEP is a focus of intensive teaching and learning but all students gain some exposure to the Chinese language and culture
 - *“Every student here will study Mandarin at some point, they all study it in Year 7 as part of their enrichment programme, they all get exposed to it and it is something that is seen as quite innovative and unique at the school.”*
- The school has taken a deliberately inclusive approach to the Year 8 Intensive Study Period in China ensuring that all eligible MEP students – across both the school and the wider MAT – can participate at minimal cost

Key elements of success so far

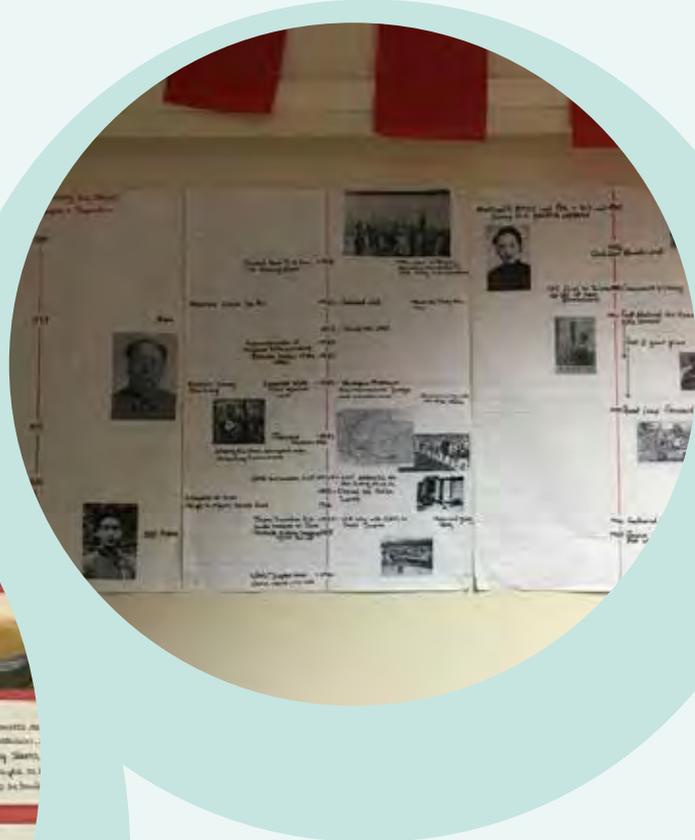
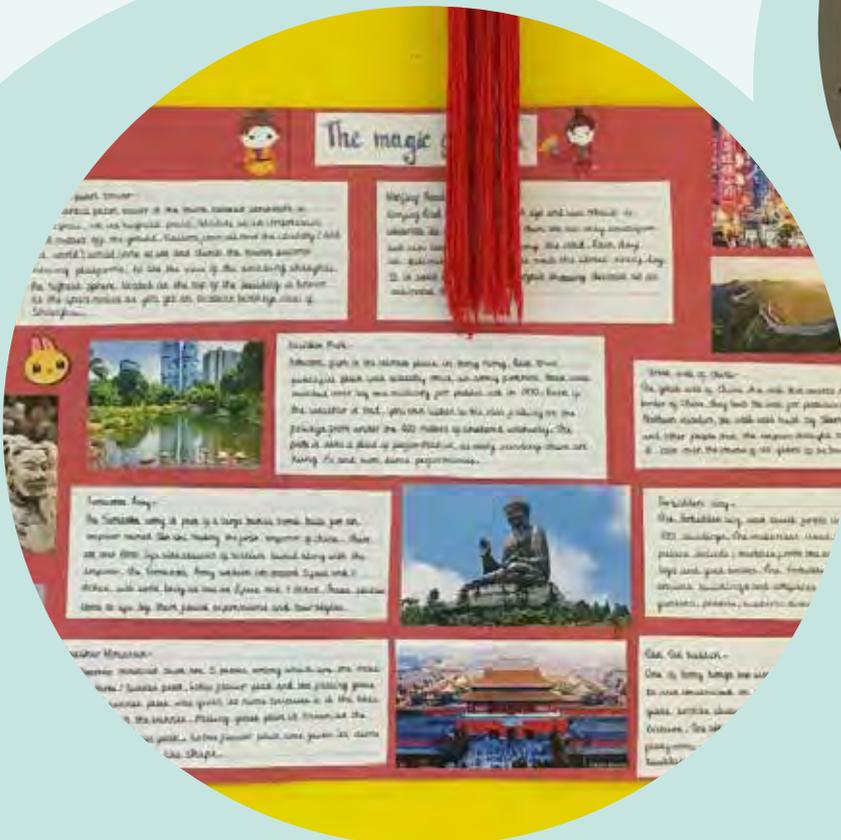
- Strong commitment to international outlook within the school and the MAT
- China already recognised as an important partner through collaborations with local engineering/ manufacturing organisations in the West Midlands and existing links within STEM projects to the country
- Close geography of participating schools within the MAT and other spoke schools in Coventry and Warwickshire has facilitated collaboration and some resource sharing across a local MEP network
 - *“The MEP programme largely benefits from a robust structure, more time allocated to it [Mandarin learning], particularly the ability to network to share resources.”*
- Use cross-school e-learning platform (Frog) and external Mandarin platforms such as GoChinese to support out of curriculum working; all MEP students across the MAT have a subscription to GoChinese and the school works with the provider to host relevant learning resources





Impact

- MEP is enhancing students' wider understanding of Chinese culture and language
 - *"For us is not only about language learning, it's about understanding other cultures and being tolerant of others...understand different faith backgrounds and different world views. This [MEP] absolutely fits with this programme of enlarging students' perception of their place in society and the world. This [MEP] is another vehicle to do that."*
- MEP is providing a base knowledge of Mandarin upon which students who go on to study other main subjects at university will be able to build
- Funding and focus of MEP is allowing development of wider extra-curriculum activities, some of which will be joint with other MEP schools in the MAT
 - *"We aim to use extra funding for up to 5 days of extra-curricular activities and at least one of those days will be a joined [across MAT schools]"*
- Fincham Park is also a teaching school and offers trainee teachers experience teaching Mandarin within the Programme



7. What are the challenges for schools in teaching Mandarin and delivering MEP and how have they overcome these challenges?

- By far the majority of staff involved in MEP at participating schools continues to regard the Programme as a success.
- 72% of respondents to our latest MEP staff survey regard the Programme as either Very Successful (41%) or Successful (31%) – with a further 11% saying it is too early to tell.
- 97% describe themselves as either Positive Advocates for the Programme (57%) or Supporters (38%) with positivity common across teachers and school managers (Chart 4).

“ This programme has revolutionised the way our students learn languages and given our students the most amazing enrichment opportunities which has brought this language to life in many different contexts.
Headteacher/School leader ”

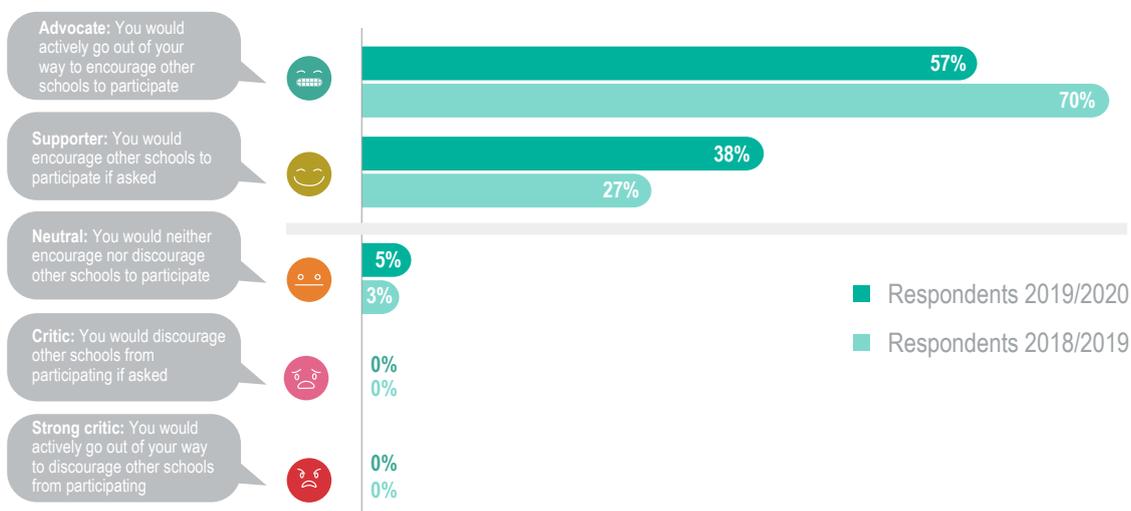
“ The experience our children have had up until this point is excellent. The opportunity to study such a diverse culture and such a different language has lit a spark under them.
Headteacher/School leader

MEP is an excellent programme. Students are lucky to join.
Teacher

Successful delivery of MEP at our school - Outstanding progress and performance of our first MEP cohort - Broadened MFL provision and enriched MFL language experience - Fabulous opportunity to close up the gap between independent sector and state sector in terms of language learning and provision.
Teacher ”

Chart 4 – Almost all staff involved in MEP remain positive advocates or supporters of the Programme

Which one of these phrases best describes the way you would now speak about MEP?



Source: MEP Staff Survey 2018/19; MEP Staff Survey 2019/20, Fieldwork and analysis by Research Stories
Base: All staff involved in MEP 2018/19 (115); All staff involved in MEP 2019/20 (98)

- Many staff continue to speak of huge interest and enthusiasm among both parents and students and most see both groups as being integrally involved in the Programme.

“ Parents see the value in it, it is more novel and interesting than French, Spanish.
Headteacher/School leader

It offers a new and interesting curriculum alongside the already established one. Parents are genuinely interested in what this offers their children.
Headteacher/School leader ”

- Teachers see MEP helping to counter the decline in language study generally and offering a visible demonstration to students and parents that it is possible to study successfully what is typically considered to be a difficult language within the wider field of MFL. And MFL is itself often regarded as being a difficult subject area.
- Chart 2 showed that a majority of staff also see that participation in the Programme brings profile and brand benefits to the school and often creates a USP and point of difference in areas in which schools are

in competition for children. Two-thirds of respondent staff say that MEP is important or very important for the marketing of their school to prospective parents. Almost half say that articles and blogs for parents have covered MEP, 28% say that the Programme has been covered in local newspapers, 9% on local TV and 8% on local radio.

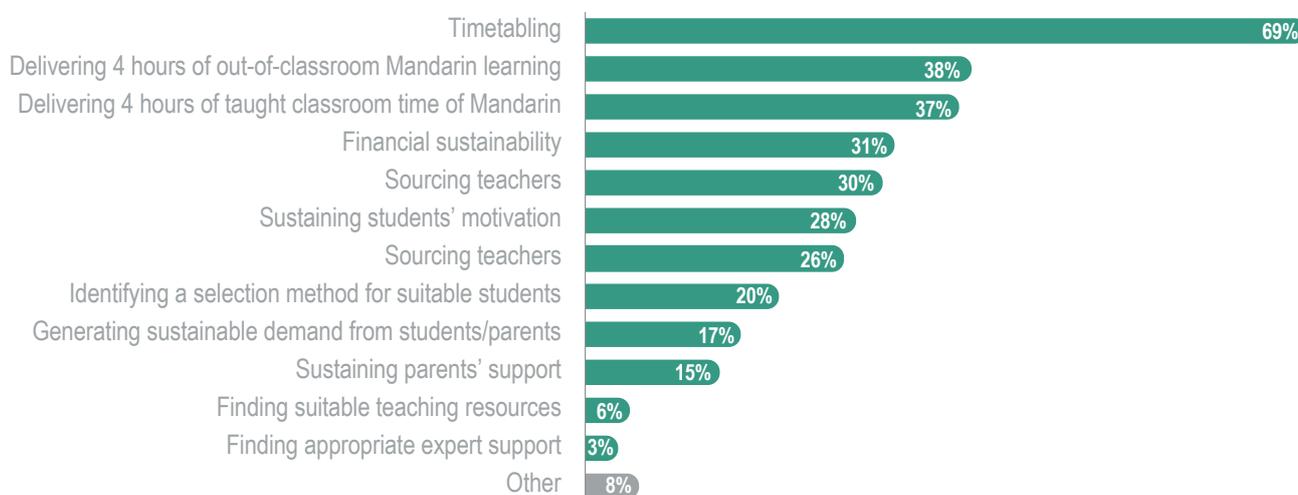
“ We are the only school [in the area] so far to offer Mandarin. Some parents come to the school because of this...
Teacher

We offer something which no other school in the area offers - a unique selling point. It prepares them for life in a global world.
Headteacher/School leader ”

- Against this background of widespread positivity and perceived success, the most widely cited practical challenge to delivery remains timetabling and ensuring that the minimum four hours of F2F teaching time within the Programme are undertaken by students (Chart 5). Indeed, the focus on the challenge of timetabling is probably more acute this year than it was at the time of our previous research in 2018/19 because the Programme is more embedded and includes more year groups in a greater number of schools than last year.

Chart 5 - Timetabling is the key practical challenge to the delivery of MEP

What are the most difficult challenges to delivering MEP at your school?



Source: MEP Staff Survey 2019/20, Fieldwork and analysis by Research Stories
 Base: All staff involved in MEP (87)

- The core issue is that the devotion of four hours to one subject means that MEP students inevitably have a different timetable to their in-year peers. It is the management of this misalignment for both student time and teaching resources which continues to cause the challenge.

“ MEP is a good experience for students to broaden horizons but difficult to meet the curriculum demands.
Headteacher/School leader ”

- There remains no common model for how schools have adapted to the challenge. The balance of time within the standard day vs outside it varies considerably and the subject areas from which extra hours have been taken also vary considerably.
- To be clear, for the vast majority of participating schools, the issue of timetabling is an inconvenience rather than an insurmountable hurdle. Most accept it as a necessary price to pay for participating in what they see as an immensely valuable Programme and they adopt a pragmatic approach to deal with it as best they can.

“ I think that despite the constraints that MEP can put on the timetable (with putting in the extra lessons, effect on other classes etc) the benefit for the children involved is positive. They make excellent progress, feel privileged and the Year 8 trip can be life-changing.
Headteacher/School leader ”

We have a headteacher who is particularly passionate about the programme and therefore has spoken to other departments to allow for the students to have 4 hours in timetable.
Teacher ”

- Sometimes of more concern for school leaders is the impact of an irregular timetable on the retention and motivation of Mandarin teachers when those teachers find themselves working irregular hours, out of line with their colleagues. In the context of a continuing national shortage of Mandarin teachers, the last thing a school wants to do is to demotivate its staff delivering MEP.

“ We have sacrificed personal time on MEP teaching at lunch/after school. Teacher ”

“ I am planning to discuss the workload issue with the Headteacher and the Finance to either take off my second subject workload or recruit another Mandarin teacher.
Teacher ”

We are being both flexible and creative in how we timetable Mandarin as the hours increase for our Mandarin teacher year on year. Fortunately she is also very flexible with her time so that is a huge help. We are making full use of the opportunity to run intensive days which helps to alleviate the timetabling issues too.

Headteacher/School leader ”

- Through its impact on teaching staff, the core challenge around timetabling links to other challenges to schools around resourcing and ultimately finance. From the school's perspective the fundamental difficulty in launching a new subject is managing the costs of teaching resources, especially during the early years when the number of class hours required does not justify employing a full-time teacher. This challenge is particularly acute for MEP because with few exceptions participating schools do not make Mandarin a compulsory subject across year groups. It is the challenge which the core funding associated with MEP was designed to address.
- For the school, the ideal Mandarin teacher from a resource efficiency perspective is somebody who can also teach other subjects and there are several examples of MEP teachers who do exactly this, most commonly teaching other languages such as Spanish or French. While there are exceptions, typically these teachers will be mother-tongue English speakers rather than mother-tongue Mandarin speakers.
- When a suitable teacher becomes available, schools often feel compelled to recruit them and potentially accept a degree of inefficiency for a year or two. Typically, they try to employ teachers part-time for a year or two and then switch to a full-time model as the MEP cohorts develop. But this may not suit all teachers and as discussed above, as the model matures within a school there comes a point where an extra resource is needed and the same dynamic plays out again.
- Several schools have taken the opportunity of some temporary spare capacity as the Programme builds to offer cultural and taster sessions about China and Mandarin to a wider group of students than those in MEP. A small number have introduced courses for older students in KS5.

- Many others have responded to the pressure to use resources efficiently by part-sharing Mandarin teachers. Of the seventy-two schools which responded to our MEP survey, twenty-six (36%) say that they have teachers who teach Mandarin in other schools. Of these, ten say that teachers teach in other schools within MEP and nine in other schools within the MAT (many of which are also part of MEP).
- The opportunity for resource sharing is an important reason why MATs have become increasingly important multipliers of MEP and why there is a natural concentration of schools within the Programme in close geographic proximity in major cities.
- There are wider benefits of this resource sharing. Teachers themselves often value the wider experience of teaching in different contexts. Several schools have also initiated links with local primary schools, especially feeder schools, so that MEP teachers spend perhaps a day per week giving taster sessions to local Year 6 pupils. The MEP school is able to offset a small amount of its employment costs, a wider group of children and parents within the local community are given exposure to Mandarin at an early age and potential recruits into the next cohort of MEP Year 7s are being identified by teachers even before the children start in the school. Pinner High School, for example, employs two Mandarin teachers who spend one day a week in local primary schools.
- MEP is itself having a positive impact on the supply of Mandarin teachers. The Mandarin Chinese IOE PGCE delivered by IOE has also grown in the past four years along with MEP and provided 20 placements to PGCE students in MEP schools in the 2019/20 academic year. Expansion of the number of schools teaching Mandarin is increasing the number of schools able to offer opportunities for teaching practice. A number of MEP schools are Teaching Schools and in some cases, teachers of other languages at MEP schools have enrolled in the Mandarin up-skilling course at IOE Confucius Institute. Twenty-eight schools in our survey (39%) said that teachers have trained or are currently training to teach Mandarin while the school has been part of MEP. Indeed, a number of teachers now delivering MEP trained in the Programme in the same school or transitioned from another MEP school elsewhere.
- There is still no common model for recruiting students into the Programme in Year 7. It remains the case that almost all schools prioritise the motivation and commitment (of parents and students) rather than pure academic ability when recruiting into MEP but it is typically the more able children who do participate. There is a general acknowledgement that the Programme is built around excellence but in a small number of schools there is some tension between this focus on excellence and the requirement to select and the ethos of a wider school environment which prioritises inclusion.

“ It’s interesting to actually teach Mandarin MEP in different schools. We collect a lot of experience to improve our teaching and learning. ”
Teacher

- The challenge of recruiting and retaining teachers is more acute outside major cities, again a reason why MEP schools cluster in those major cities. Schools within the Programme outside major cities are often heavily dependent on the availability of one individual teacher who, through chance, lives and works in that location. On the small number of occasions where schools have struggled with the Programme it is often because of a personal challenge faced by that one teacher. In larger schools and/or in bigger cities there are more resources to cover for individual difficulties. In smaller, more isolated schools, the absence of the one individual can make the Programme literally undeliverable. Exactly half of the MEP schools replying to our survey say that they have only one Mandarin teacher in the school.

“ We want to get very good GCSE results but for year 7 cohort we take a lot of children, middle leveland high level We cannot compete with other schools that are more selective. ”
Teacher

- Several schools will have already identified some potential students through outreach to Year 6 children in feeder schools. Others provide taster sessions for all Year 7 students in the first few weeks of term and then select based on motivation and some informal assessment of aptitude in discussion with parents. Some schedule these taster sessions for lunch-times or after school and recruit in part on the basis of attendance - on the logical basis that if children do not attend these they are unlikely to attend sessions of the full Programme. A few have a light touch but more formal assessment as a selection criterion at the Autumn half term.

- Many schools with multi-year experience of the Programme have adapted their selection procedures quite considerably along the way as they have learned what works well for them. And those with experience increasingly recognise that the Programme will not suit every student and that appropriate selection at the outset is fundamental in developing and sustaining a successful Programme within the school over the longer term.

“ I believe that an improved selection process is essential to the success of the MEP in schools. ”
Teacher

- Appropriate selection links directly to motivation. While the consensus is that keeping students motivated around Mandarin per se is generally not an issue (and we have noted the considerable motivational impact of the Year 8 Intensive Study Period in China and the Year 9 UK Study Period), motivation can become an issue in the context of other pressures on students' time, especially when there is an increasing time requirement pre or post-school or during weekends. Teachers within the Programme are generally very aware of these issues and make extra efforts to keep their lessons as fun, fast-paced and engaging as possible.

“ The main challenge is being a teenager and being tired. The second thing is because they are high achieving students and high expectations of parents they also do things like music and drama and they are looking to have high marks in all their subjects. High achieving students are under so much pressure. ”
Teacher

We had an extra one hour after-school lesson, but students were tired after a whole day learning. Therefore the effect [of this extra lesson] is not as ideal as the other three lessons on the timetable.

Teacher ”

- A very small number of schools express concerns around the Intensive Study Period in China. Some of these concerns are administrative, reflecting the bureaucracy involved in obtaining visas.

“ Having done the intensive learning last year, I think we will be better prepared to deal with the amount of admin associated with this trip (the visas were a nightmare) ”
Headteacher/School leader

- A small minority of accompanying staff feel that the teaching style and approach in China is challenging for MEP students. IOE CI invests considerable time and effort to prepare the local teachers to teach the MEP students through a training course run in China. Yet, a few staff feel that there is still too big a misalignment in both the teaching style and course content, resulting in some issues with classroom management and student engagement. It may simply be that as the scale of the Study Period expands, it becomes more difficult to ensure absolute uniformity of approach and level across all study centres and teachers. In summer 2019, there were ten host study centres in seven cities in China.

“ Many of the teachers [in China] are still in the stage of learning and developing and maybe don't have experience with UK groups. ”
Teacher

Universities [in China] design their own textbook for the two week course which is really challenging; for me it feels like University students' level. ”
Teacher



Case Study 6: Lyng Hall School



Location: Coventry, West Midlands

1 teaching staff involved in MEP

Joined MEP in 2017/18

Overall, how do you rate the success of MEP at your school so far? “SUCCESSFUL”

School context

- A relatively small community-oriented inner-city school (775 students in 2018/19) that is now part of the Finham Park Multi Academy Trust (MAT)
- The MAT is comprised of two local primary schools and two other secondary schools in Coventry, Finham Park (MEP Hub School) and Finham Park 2 also within MEP
- Rated 'Good' in a 2019 OFSTED report
- The school is sited in one of the 10 most economically deprived wards in the country: an estimated 60% of students are in receipt of Pupil Premium funding
- The school also has a share of SEND children far above national averages
- The local catchment area is highly diverse with many students having an Eastern European, South Asian or Middle Eastern heritage and includes families who have sought asylum in the UK
- An estimated two-thirds of students speak a language other than English at home and these students speak 47 different languages in total, with Romanian, Slovak and Roma languages among the most common
- The school runs an active programme teaching English to 50-60 children in each intake who do not have English as a mother tongue
- Lyng Hall offers two Modern Foreign Languages on the curriculum - Mandarin and Spanish – but also supports students learning many of their local community languages

MEP Journey

- Joined MEP in 2017/18 alongside its sister school Finham Park 2 and under the guidance of MAT lead and MEP Hub school Finham Park
- Employs a lead teacher for MEP who can also teach Spanish
- MEP Cohorts (2019/20): Year 7 (31); Year 8 (32); Year 9 (27)

Role of MEP in the school

- Selection process is based on children's and parents' motivation and interest in participating in MEP and their understanding of the commitment required
- Some drop-out from MEP was expected but so far the motivation has remained very high and drop-out has been very small
- The Year 8 Intensive Study in China and Year 9 conference with other schools on a UK university campus are major motivators and provide a hugely important opportunity for students to expand their horizons and meet children from other schools and backgrounds
- Participation in these activities is consciously inclusive and funded across the MAT to ensure maximum participation, regardless of family finances
- Plans to offer Mandarin taster sessions to students within the school outside MEP

Key elements of success so far

- Commitment of the Head and the MAT
- Alignment to the school's ethos of expecting "Excellence for and from all"
- Recruitment of a teacher who can teach both Mandarin and Spanish
- Experience and guidance the school could draw on from Finham Park School and initial sharing of resources across the MAT
- Delivery of 6 hours of Mandarin lessons in school; 4hrs within the standard curriculum plus 2hrs in extra Period 6

Impact

- Provides a significant boost to students' self-esteem
- MEP gives often disadvantaged students an opportunity to be part of what is regarded as being an extraordinary Programme and provides students with the right tools to compete equally with students from other schools
 - "MEP is an opportunity for (our) children to excel in something that is not non-mainstream."



- The latest OFSTED report specifically highlights MEP as supporting the offer of a more challenging curriculum to higher ability children
 - *“There is a most able group in Years 7 and 8 who follow a bespoke curriculum which includes the study of Mandarin and is ensuring that pupils are able to follow a curriculum that is more suited to their prior attainment” Ofsted Report, June 2019*
- MEP helps to expand the geographical and aspirational horizons of students
- It provides opportunities for students to participate in out of the ordinary activities, events and experiences and to interact with children from other schools both within the MAT and within the wider MEP community
- Plans for the school’s Mandarin teacher to provide taster sessions to year 6 students in local primary schools



8. Are schools following the requirements for 8 hours of study a week?

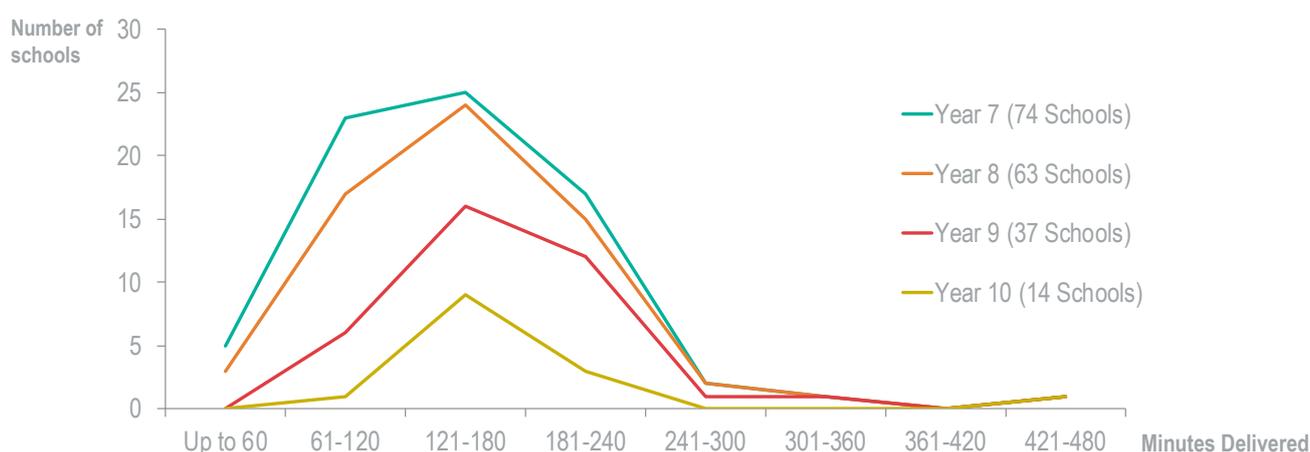
How have schools scheduled teacher taught classroom time into their timetable and how have they adapted the remainder of the school timetable to allow for this?

- As a result of pressure on timetabling, it is still apparent that most schools within MEP deliver the required four hours of F2F teaching with the remaining four hours being guided self-study. There are several exceptions such as Dartford Grammar School and St Mary Magdalene Academy which deliver more F2F hours. It is also true that a 'curriculum hour' varies from school to school.
- If there is a typical MEP school, it delivers three hours of this F2F teaching within the standard school timetable and the one extra hour outside the timetable (Chart 6, Chart 7). A considerable number deliver the alternative configuration of 2 and 2 (two hours within the standard timetable and two hours outside) and a significant minority claim to deliver all four hours within the standard timetable, although this may be an expanded timetable vs a typical school.
- There are some outliers, with Ratton School in Eastbourne and Astrea Academy in Sheffield, for example, initially delivering all four F2F hours outside the standard timetable, although they have the intention to bring some of the teaching hours into the timetable as MEP becomes established.

Chart 6 - MEP schools typically deliver three hours of F2F teaching per week within the standard school timetable

Minutes of F2F teaching delivered per week within the standard school timetable (2019/2020)

By number of schools and MEP year group

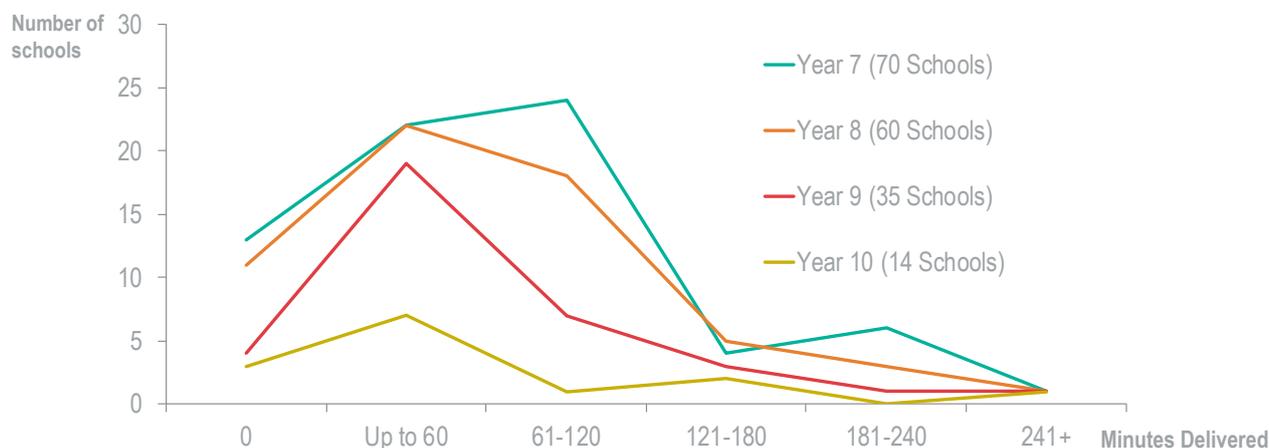


Base: MEP schools reporting to UCL IOE Confucius Institute for Schools (2019)

Chart 7 - MEP schools typically deliver one or two hours of F2F teaching per week outside the standard school timetable

Minutes of F2F teaching delivered per week outside the standard school timetable (2019/2020)

By number of schools and MEP year group



Base: MEP schools reporting to UCL IOE Confucius Institute for Schools (2019)

- No school can simply swap hours devoted to another subject to MEP (e.g. 3 hrs MEP rather than 3 hrs French), so almost every school has to find extra hours from other subjects and to maintain parallel timetables for MEP and non-MEP students.
- After four years of the Programme, every school still has a slightly different model of how they 'find' the necessary in-timetable hours and when they deliver the out-of-timetable hours. Indeed, the striking finding is that there is almost no like-for-like duplication of approach across schools at all, a reflection of the fact that each school has a different core timetable and different priorities within that.
- And as MEP cohorts move into Year 8 and 9 and now into KS4, the timetabling often changes within a school, reflecting both the evolving needs of student cohorts and learning within the school over time. The data of Chart 7 suggest that as the Programme matures into Years 9 and 10, more F2F hours tend to be brought into the standard timetable reflecting the greater flexibility in KS4. Many schools have also adapted their timetabling within year groups as their experience of the Programme has grown.
- Extra hours are occasionally taken from another language, potentially reducing choice, although this is unusual. More commonly, the hours are taken from personal development time, from tutor time or from subjects ranging across, for example, Music, Art or design.

“ It is very hard to overcome this challenge as the MEP pupils are taken out from their other lessons e.g. Drama, Computer Science and Music to do Mandarin. This could discourage them as they don't want to miss these lessons. ”
Teacher

- The delivery model for out-of-hours F2F teaching varies enormously. Often it involves lunchtime or after-school classes but some schools run classes before school or on occasions on Saturday morning. A few hold occasional extra intensive days, effectively an extra day schooling devoted to Mandarin taken from holidays or weekends in order to catch up on required F2F hours.
- We noted in last year's report that schools with large catchment areas involving significant travel time worry about holding pre or post school classes because of the impact on travel and safety for students, so they will often use lunchtime sessions.

“ We have after school/ lunch time lessons to meet the timetable requirement. ”
Teacher

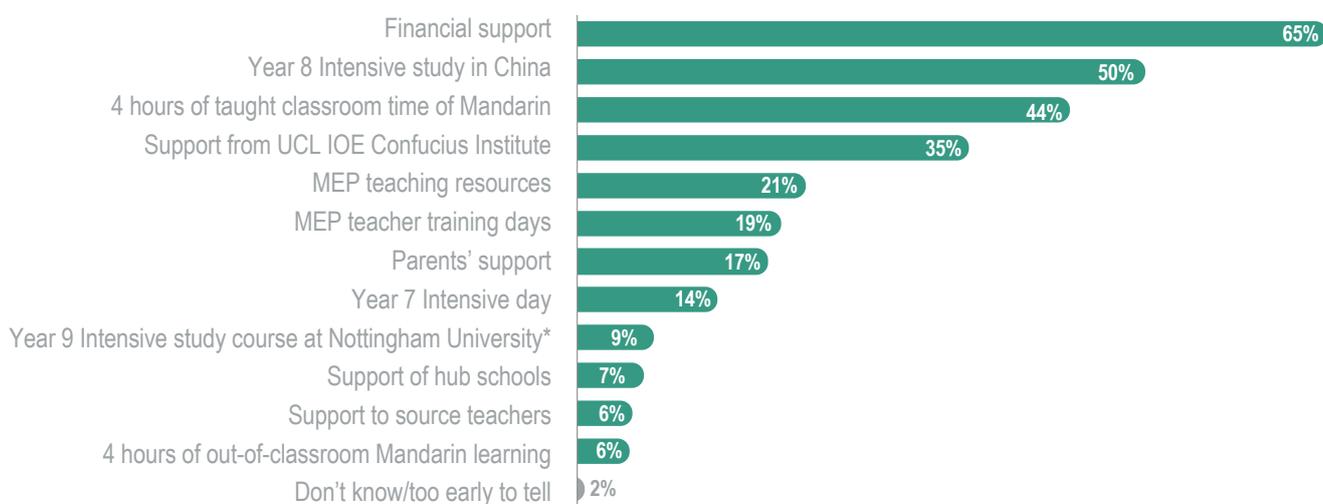
How has the MEP approach supported pupil outcomes and which elements of this approach might be useful in supporting the teaching of other subjects

- As MEP has built over time, a greater share of participating schools are new to teaching Mandarin within the curriculum rather than being the more experienced Hub schools of the first cohort. As a result, in undertaking the second round of evaluation research it has become increasingly clear that the value of MEP to schools is very much in the combination of its different elements working together (Chart 8).
- The value of the Year 8 intensive study period in China has become more fully appreciated following the greater level of involvement in and perceived success of the Summer 2019 study period.

“I think MEP is really beneficial for the students, especially the intensive learning weeks in China.”
Teacher

Chart 8 - Financial Support, Year 8 Intensive study in China, the 4 hours of classroom teaching and support from UCL IOE CI are considered to be the most important contributors to the success of MEP

Which are the three most important aspects in contributing to the success of MEP?



* A minority of respondent schools have participated so far

Source: MEP Staff Survey 2019/20, Fieldwork and analysis by Research Stories
Base: All staff involved in MEP (94)

- The Intensive Study Period in China for Year 8 and its parallel study period at Nottingham University for Year 9s are seen to have multiple benefits (Chart 9):
 - They embed and reinforce language learning, in particular allowing students to see and practise Mandarin as a living global language,
 - The study period in China in particular provides a unique cultural experience which for some students is seen to be potentially life changing,
 - They build students' independence, confidence and resilience,

“ You can see that when they come back from the China trip, they are confident, their language ability and even their passion is really different. It is a life changing opportunity. Even their personality changes. ”
Teacher

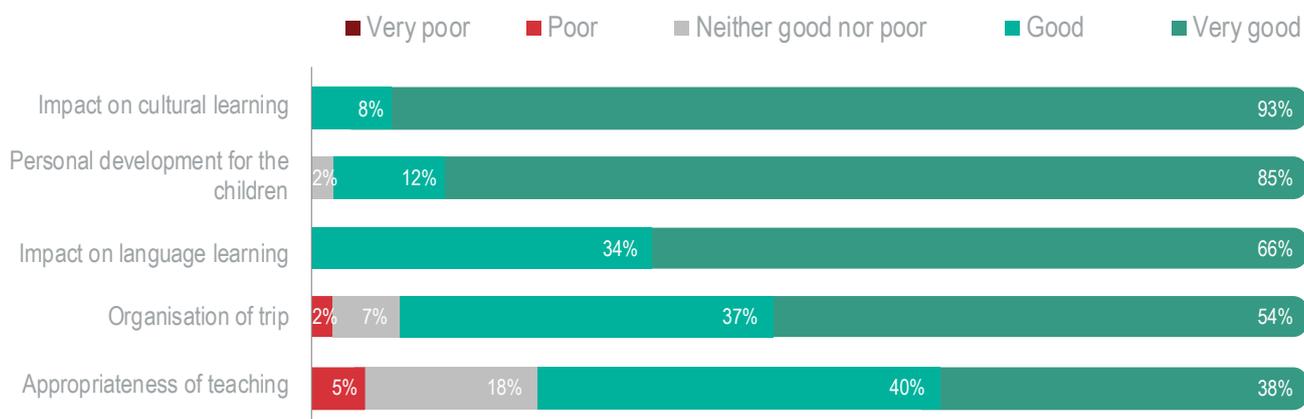
- They allow students to meet, study and socialise with their peers from across the country on an equal basis in a shared community of learning,

“ The students enjoy meeting other MEP students. By knowing there are a lot of students around the UK like them, it really helps them to learn and face the challenges. ”
Teacher

- They allow teachers from across the Programme to meet, discuss and share knowledge and learning in a shared community of practice,
- They act as significant motivators for student participation in the Programme and commitment to its demanding requirements.

Chart 9 – The Year 8 Intensive Study in China is highly regarded by teachers, especially for its impact on cultural and language learning and on students' personal development

How do you rate the following aspects of the Year 8 Intensive Study in China?



Source: MEP Staff Survey 2019/20, Fieldwork and analysis by Research Stories
 Base: All staff in MEP schools undertaking Year 8 Intensive Study in China (40); NB: Small sample size, excludes 'Don't know'

- The fundamental driver of improved learning outcomes is still seen to be the enhanced (typically four) F2F classroom hours. It is the more extensive contact hours allowing for language and cultural learning and the fact that the contact and exposure to the language is relatively continuous throughout the school week that teachers believe is really making the difference to the speed and quality of learning outcomes.

“ The MEP is a great opportunity for students to learn Chinese at an accelerated rate. The required contact time allows for the all important classroom teaching and learning time that schools otherwise would not have.

Teacher

The Programme and the time allocated in the curriculum allows the students to work towards mastery of the language in a way that is difficult for students learning other languages in KS3 and 4. It also incorporates culture as an integrated part of the learning through the projects, and in my opinion this is incredibly important as language and culture are inextricably linked. The funding and opportunity for Year 8 students to visit China is wonderful. These students are being offered something incredible and unique, and an opportunity that is potentially life-changing. Long may it continue!

Teacher

- The impact of enhanced F2F hours is amplified by the fact that those hours are delivered to students who have been pre-selected for their motivation and ability and often, although not always, delivered to smaller class sizes than is typical in other subject areas. This creates a reinforcing circle of talented, motivated students who see their own rapid progress in the subject which in turn builds their self-esteem and motivates them to do more. The learning is then reinforced during the extended self-guided study hours.

“ Due to increased curriculum time and smaller classes students are more confident when communicating orally. Groups made up almost exclusively of higher ability students mean that the majority of lessons can be taught in the TL, so aural comprehension is increased.

Headteacher/School leader

- Many teachers see immediately that the impact of MEP could in principle be replicated in other languages or indeed in other subject areas. We noted in our previous report that teachers of other Modern Foreign Languages often look with a conflicted mix of pleasure and envy at the time and opportunities for Mandarin available within MEP.
- As a model of targeted Excellence, with an inherent element of selectivity built in, it is clearly working. And given the availability of funding it could be replicated (more or less) as, say, the Japanese Excellence Model, the Arabic Excellence Model or even the Computer Science Excellence Model. But the core challenge to the model within a school context remains the timetable and to the extent that is essentially a challenge of time availability, that is also the fundamental barrier to reproducing the ‘MEP model’ in other subject areas.



9. Is there sufficient support for participating schools from the Mandarin Excellence Programme?

- There are six main sources of support for MEP:
 - Financial support,
 - Support to the whole Programme from UCL IOE Confucius Institute for Schools,
 - The Hanban Teacher Programme,
 - More localised support for schools through the MEP Hub and Spoke model,
 - Support provided within formal structures outside MEP, most obviously MATs,
 - Other teacher networks and friendship groups.
- Survey responses (Chart 10) suggest that MEP schools have drawn widely on many of these sources of support and that broadly speaking the package available to schools within the Programme has been appropriate and effective.

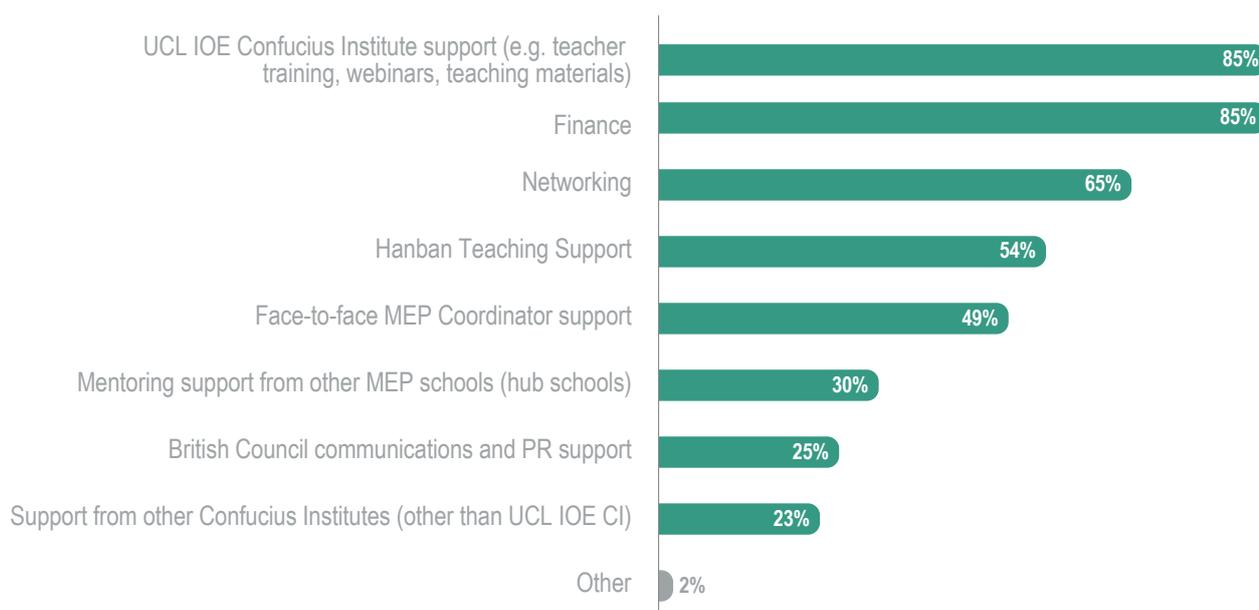
“ The MEP has been a huge success in our school. The programme has been thoughtfully designed and the input from the various parties has been nothing other than excellent. The materials and resources provided by UCL are high quality and the input of the British Council has been extremely helpful. The intensive learning in China is an amazing experience for students (and staff) and was very well organised and supported. The way that the programme is funded is also very helpful in ensuring the programme is successful.

Headteacher/School leader

”

Chart 10 - Support from UCL IOE CI, Finance and Networking Opportunities are seen as key elements of support within MEP

So far, which of the following sources of support have you used or benefited from as part of MEP?



Source: MEP Staff Survey 2019/20, Fieldwork and analysis by Research Stories
Base: All staff involved in MEP (87)

- School leaders in particular point to the importance of financial support in facilitating their engagement with the Programme for the reasons discussed earlier. The funding allows schools to recruit staff and in particular to bridge the gap while classroom demand is building in the first two years of the Programme. It also facilitates students' engagement in the wider programme of activities both those organised nationally within MEP and those organised locally within and between partner schools.

“ The programme is well funded and the support we have received from UCL has been excellent. It has allowed us to introduce a completely new language to our curriculum and students absolutely love it!
Headteacher/School leader ”

- As the centre of gravity of the participating schools has moved more towards schools new to Mandarin on the curriculum, the range and quality of support provided by IOE CI has become even more widely appreciated across the Programme. During the most recent wave of research we have heard many unsolicited comments of praise both for individual members of the IOE CI team and for the institution as a whole.
- At a basic level IOE CI appears to have been successful in bringing a relatively large number of schools into a highly demanding Programme and giving them a shared understanding and common purpose.

“ As I'm new to MEP, I found the training organised by IOE most useful. Furthermore, the MEP team in IOE are very helpful.
Teacher ”

- More substantively, IOE CI has provided direct support to learning outcomes in the shape of prepared resources and input to teaching. This support is most relevant to the many relatively newly qualified teachers delivering the Programme but is also widely recognised by Headteachers and school leaders.

“ IOE are excellent and have supported the school with sourcing teachers and improving the quality of teaching and resources.
Headteacher/School leader ”

“ The IOE support has been excellent. I am [also] enrolled on the Mandarin Upskilling course and this has been fantastic so far.
Teacher ”

- Teachers recognise the development of a community of practice and a network of supportive contacts building through the Programme. Initiatives to maintain leadership level engagement in the shape of regular meetings of Heads also appear to have worked well in maintaining their support.

“ Networking events organised by UCL IOE are particularly useful so that we can meet other teachers and share ideas/challenges face to face. This has been MEP teachers meetings and also more general training events e.g. re the new GCSE.
Teacher ”

IOE support and materials are great as are the meetings hosted at UCL as these provide valuable networking opportunities. The Chinese teacher community which has grown out of MEP is very supportive.
Headteacher/School leader ”

The affiliation with UCL IOE has been an invaluable network support guidance and an opportunity particularly at a teacher level to share best practice in terms of leading languages in a school. It has also given me the opportunity to sit in a forum with Headteachers in a room and for each of us to bring what we are doing in our school and share it.
Headteacher/School leader ”

- The face to face MEP coordinator support is perceived by schools to be valuable and especially so by those schools that have found it challenging to deliver the Programme. Out of the 76 schools, 68 (89%) have received a face-to-face visit where the Chinese teacher met with the MEP coordinator since the Programme began and four unvisited schools were new to the Programme this year. All 76 schools would have been visited by the end of the 2019/20 academic year had Covid-19 not happened.

- An important, specific area of support from IOE CI has been provided to the small number of schools which have struggled to deliver the Programme. When this has happened it has generally been for one of two different reasons. Either the school as a whole has been experiencing difficulties and the leadership team has been too busy focusing on other issues to give MEP sufficient focus. Or, an individual teacher has encountered difficulties professionally or personally. A high proportion of teachers within the Programme are relatively newly qualified, a stage of professional development which is often challenging. And we noted earlier that half of schools within MEP have only one teacher which makes their role within the Programme in that school absolutely critical.
- Where this has happened, IOE CI has been very pro-active, both providing direct teaching support and support more generally to source a replacement teacher where necessary.
- As MEP has expanded and the ability level of students has risen, Hanban teachers are playing an increasingly important role in supporting delivery of the Programme, especially, although not exclusively, alongside non-native teachers. On occasions Hanban teachers are shared between schools within the Programme or Hub schools lend them to Spoke schools for a few days a week.
- The Hanban Teacher Programme is not part of MEP as such and schools can decide whether or not to opt in. It is a global initiative of the Confucius Institute Headquarters in China which sponsors qualified teachers in China to spend up to two years supporting the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language outside China. Within MEP, Hanban teachers offer important practice in speaking and listening and often play a particular role supporting children who may be struggling with remedial and/or one-on-one sessions.
- In situations where there is only one Mandarin teacher in a school, Hanban teachers are especially useful. However, there are still schools within the Programme which do not have a Hanban teacher and finding ways to increase supply and ensure that they work in schools which can most benefit from their presence remains a priority.
- We noted in our Wave 1 report that the effectiveness of the Hub and Spoke model of support is patchy and the evidence of our more recent research suggests that remains the case. Looking across MEP it is the one area which has probably not delivered the impact originally envisaged.
- There are still some very positive examples of support being offered and received but other schools which might benefit from local support sometimes appear hardly to know who their Hub school is and to have had limited contact with that school. While 29% of staff respondents to our most recent survey said that the Hub and Spoke system in relation to MEP had been very or extremely useful, 31% said that it had only been slightly or not at all useful.

“ They [Hub School] did the main organisation of Year 7 MEP intensive learning day. That’s a great help. They also provide 1.5 days Hanban teacher to my school although I would like to have more.
Teacher

We didn’t have any support from the hub school.
Teacher ”

“ Our well-trained Hanban teacher is an invaluable support for a non-native teacher like myself.
Teacher

Hanban teachers are amazing.
Teacher

Our two Hanban teachers are a huge help! Without them we would not be able to deliver the MEP effectively.
Teacher ”

- The biggest challenges to the effectiveness of the Hub and Spoke model are geography and time; the lack of time of the teachers involved and the time and financial costs of travel between schools (Chart 11).



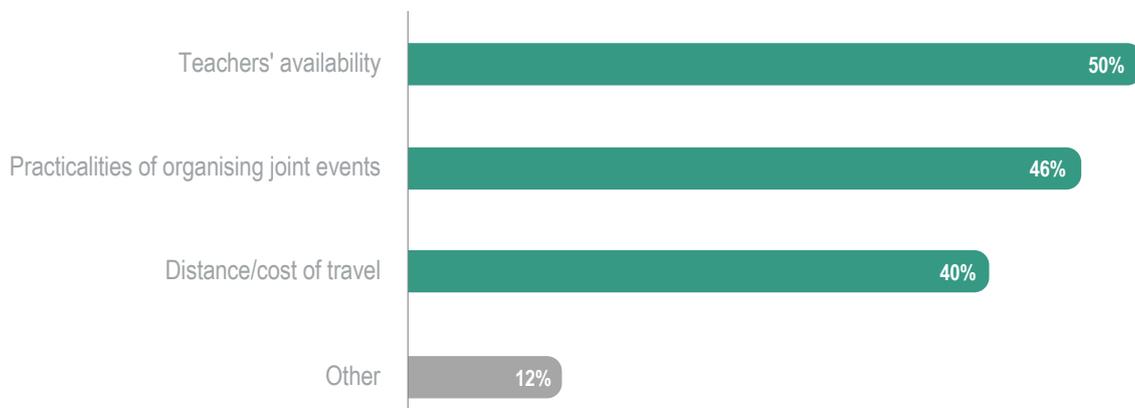
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Chart 11 – Pressure on teacher time and availability is seen as a major barrier to success of the Hub and Spoke system of support

What are the main barriers to success of the Hub and Spoke system?



Source: MEP Staff Survey 2019/20, Fieldwork and analysis by Research Stories
Base: All staff involved in MEP (84)

- Some schools do not feel they need help anyway and as discussed previously, the emerging role of MATs has started to overlap with the original vision of the Hub and Spoke model. Where schools are in a MAT it is often easier and more natural to work together, especially in terms of resource sharing, than with an unconnected school possibly some distance away.
- A number of schools have also drawn on support from their local Confucius Institute and the role of the British Council both in organising the Intensive Study Period in China and in providing support to communication is widely referenced and appreciated.
- Finally, many teachers draw heavily for support on their own informal contact and friendship networks. The world of Mandarin teaching in the UK remains a relatively small one and many teachers remain in touch with colleagues whom they have met while training, through MEP or the IOE CI e-forum and networking events. The IOE CI e-forum which has over 1,000 teachers enrolled plays an important role in connecting teachers together, along with the IOE CI Annual Chinese teaching conference where MEP schools deliver workshops. There are also other yearly IOE CI teacher training events.



10. Pupil progression

Are pupils on track to achieve a high level of fluency in Mandarin, this includes being on track for taking HSK 4 and HSK 5 qualifications, GCSEs and A level (or equivalents), within six years of joining the Programme?

- Relative to non-MEP students, teachers continue to believe that their students are showing significantly increased and accelerated learning and a much broader language and cultural knowledge base at key milestones.

“ We have only been teaching in the MEP for one half term. So far, the mastery and depth of knowledge achieved by MEP students far outstrips that achieved by their peers in mainstream Mandarin classes.
Teacher

.....the funding has given our students additional opportunities (e.g. additional lessons, Year 7 intensive learning days, Foreign Office celebration, China trip, Nottingham Uni) which have resulted in students' level of Mandarin being significantly higher than before the MEP.
Teacher

- Evidence for the acceleration of learning is the significant minority of schools who say that they expect most of their MEP students to follow a compressed exams pathway. The standard exam pathway within the Programme is for students to sit HSK3 as a Hurdle test in Year 10 and GCSE Mandarin alongside other GCSEs in Year 11. We do not have complete data but leaders in at least nine schools say that they are expecting the majority of students to sit GCSE Mandarin in Year 9 and a further 5 in Year 10.
 - Of these fourteen schools, 6 say that they will use the extra time until the end of KS4 to teach for the HSK4 exam, 5 for the Cambridge Pre-U and one for A Level, with the remainder currently unsure.
- The impact of the Coronavirus lockdown permitting, the results of Year 10 MEP students who take HSK 3 as a Hurdle Test in summer 2020 will give the first externally validated indication of progress on the path to fluency across the initial cohort of MEP students. The data available so far through Hurdle tests suggests that the results will be very positive, although using a formal exam as a Hurdle test is not universally popular with teachers.

“ I think content wise it is good for the children to expand their reading. I think that is great but I am not very sure about preparing them for two exams, whether our children are going to cope with it is another thing...This is also additional stress for the pupils.
Teacher

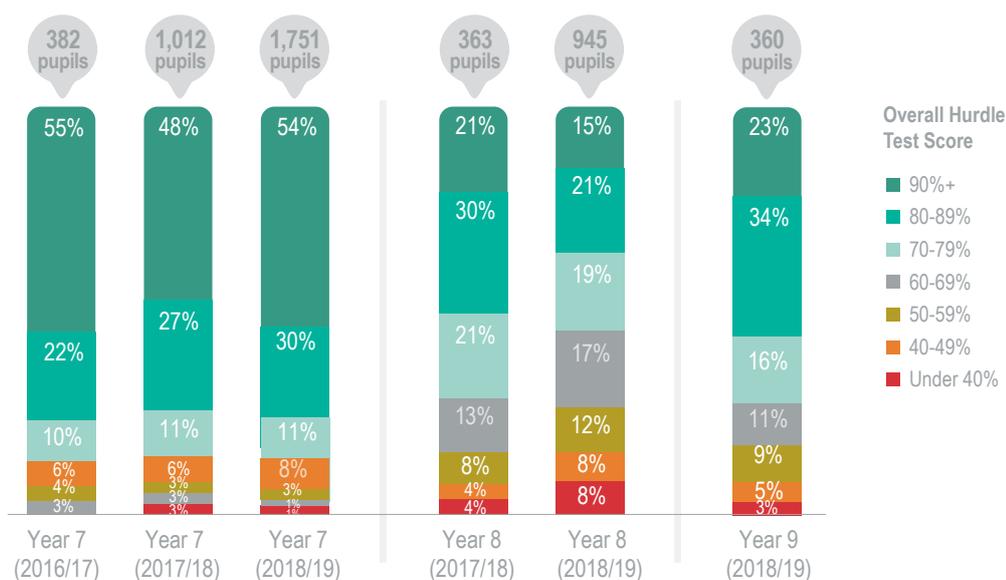
We [should] spend more time for the children to study GCSEs rather than study for two examinations. I find this very hard.
Teacher

- The most advanced Hurdle test results available to date are for Year 9s from the first MEP student cohort recruited in 15 schools (including Archbishop Sentamu) in 2016/2017. All of these schools were enrolled for their previous experience with the language.
- These results show that the average student score across the four skills areas of speaking, reading, writing and listening was 93% in the highest performing school. Eleven other schools achieved an average score of between 70% and 89%. Three schools scored in the range 61%-63% while the lowest performing school scored 57%.
- Of the 360 students who took the Year 9 tests, 84% had an average score of 60% or above, with 23% scoring above 90%. Only 8% scored below 50%.
- A large majority of students within the first MEP cohort are performing on or above expectations, as are all schools within the cohort.
- The results distribution by schools and students for the Year 7 and Year 8 cohorts over successive years are summarised in Chart 12 and Chart 13.
- The data also suggest that results for the second cohort of Year 8 students taking Hurdle tests in 2018/2019 (which includes students in the first group of schools to be recruited without previous experience with Mandarin) are strong but significantly weaker than the results from 2017/2018 which only included students from the more experienced schools.

- The ranking of schools for 2018/2019 Year 8 Hurdle tests by average total score across all of their students shows that six of the seven highest ranking schools are Hub schools from the 2016/2017 cohort. The average total Year 8 school score for all of these first cohort Hub schools is 74% vs 65% for the less experienced schools recruited in the second 2017/2018 cohort.
- The implication is that the first cohort of students to take GCSEs in summer 2021 will most likely obtain exceptional results but those results may not be completely replicated in future years. There appears to be value in school experience and track-record in Mandarin, quite possibly reflecting the greater experience of many of the teachers in those schools.

Chart 12 - Distribution of students by overall Hurdle Test score

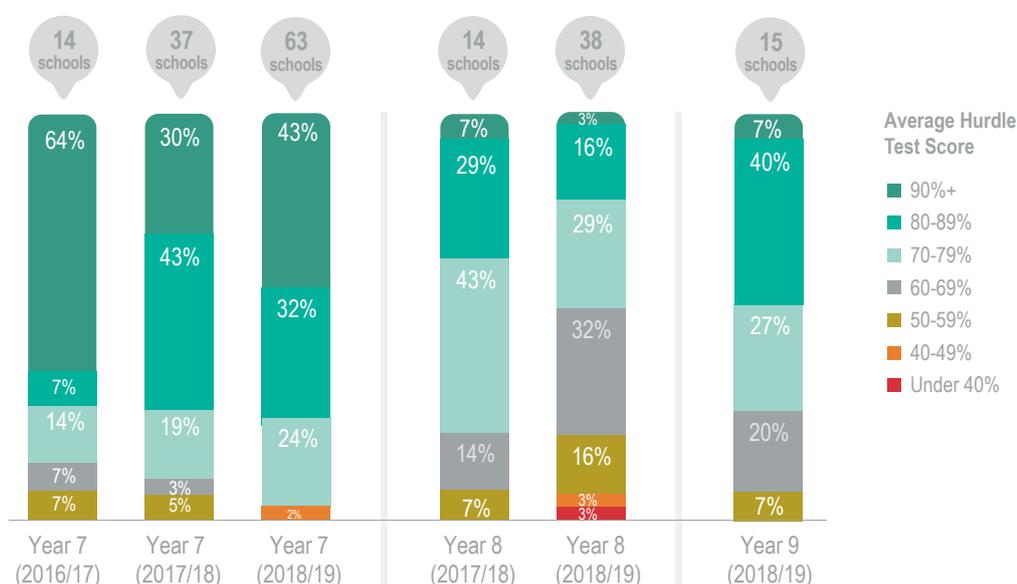
% of students by overall Hurdle Test score



Source: MEP Hurdle test results 2017, 2018, 2019; UCL IOE data; Analysis by Research Stories.
 Base: All MEP schools results for pupils participating in MEP programme- Yr7 2016/17 (382), Yr7 2017/18 (1,012), Yr7 2018/19 (1,751), Yr8 2017/18 (363), Yr8 2018/19 (945), Yr9 2018/19 (360).

Chart 13 - Distribution of schools by average overall Hurdle Test score

% of schools by overall Hurdle Test score



Source: MEP Hurdle test results 2017, 2018, 2019; UCL IOE data; Analysis by Research Stories.
 Base: All MEP participating schools.

- Alongside the learning outcomes, there is a growing awareness of the positive personal impacts on students resulting from participation in the Programme. Although not formally measured, teachers and leaders at a number of schools have spoken of the sense of pride and confidence which develops in MEP students. They argue that MEP students often feel that participation gives them something special, an added sense of self-esteem and self-identity and that often leads to the development of a strong sense of obligation to try hard to succeed for themselves and for the school because of an awareness of the extra opportunities open to them.

“ [MEP] Develops a feeling of doing something different and special.
Headteacher/School leader

Programme has been a huge success; pupils are proud to be Mandarin learners.
Headteacher/School leader ”

- The activities outside the classroom, the opportunities to meet students from other schools, the Year 9 intensive study at Nottingham University and above all the Intensive Study Period in China are seen to have a marked positive impact on children's resilience, self-confidence and personal development, especially in the minority of MEP schools in relatively deprived areas. The activities within the Programme have also been a springboard to development activities outside it. Thirty-four schools in the Programme say they have participated in the annual HSBC/British Council Mandarin speaking competition, a national competition for non-native speakers which historically has been dominated by independent schools.

“ It [MEP] raises aspirations and makes what some students thought was impossible, possible!
Headteacher/School leader ”

- The perceived value of these extra activities to schools in less affluent areas is so great that they typically try very hard to minimize the costs to parents, to avoid any risk of exclusion. Lyng Hall school in Coventry is one school which financed the Intensive Study Period in China so that parents only had to cover the costs of visas (and on occasions even covered the costs of those). As it is one of three MEP schools in Coventry within a MAT, both of the other schools adopted the same approach to ensure fairness. The additional funding available in 2019 to support MEP students

eligible for Pupil Premium was a significant facilitator of this inclusive approach.

- All schools are conscious that a sense of separateness and exceptionalism can potentially have negative impacts too, but we did not find any evidence of those. Staff often point to whole school benefits stemming from involvement in the Programme and on occasions a wider sense of pride developing among non-MEP students that their school hosts a national programme for excellence.

“ Mandarin lunch time club is provided to the whole school because of MEP.
Teacher

As a result of the school's participation in this programme, we have delivered assemblies on aspects of Chinese culture for all students. We have also been hosts to a school group from our sister school in Beijing, and many children outside of the MEP programme were involved in and benefited from this.
Headteacher/School leader

Whole school cultural assemblies - Positive atmosphere in learning languages - Healthy competition generating positive learning atmosphere.
Teacher ”



Which classroom teaching approaches are having the most impact on improving pupil attainment and progression in the subject, for example, whole class teaching, direct instruction, and use of textbooks?

- Teaching styles and specific practice within MEP vary by school and by teacher as they do across all subjects. The core skills of teaching in terms of maintaining interest and engagement apply to MEP as to any other subject but the diversity of practice and the willingness of teachers to try different approaches is part of the richness of the Programme.
- A few teachers use almost all of their own resources but the majority structure lessons and the term around units within a textbook. Jin Bu is now becoming almost standard in KS3 with a small number using Easy Steps to Chinese or Kuaile Hanyu. As more students move into KS4, schools are also using GCSE textbooks from AQA and Edexcel.
- A typical lesson will involve an initial, teacher-led exploration of a textbook theme, area of vocabulary or a point of grammar in a whole class setting using PowerPoint or a whiteboard followed by timed exercises to test learning and/or group working supported on a more personal basis by the teacher and classroom assistant.
- Many teachers argue that establishing a strong foundation in the language does require a degree of rote learning and repeated practice which is possibly greater than for European languages. So, there is an attention to learning characters and practising writing them which might involve drawing the strokes in the air in a classroom setting and then consolidating learning using tracing books or apps at home. To address this challenge, IOE CI has established the Chinese Character Pedagogy Project, funded and delivered through the MEP contract. The Project is a teacher-led research project that will develop a clear pedagogical approach to teaching Chinese characters. The intention is that Mandarin Excellence Programme students and the wider cohort of students learning Chinese in all schools should benefit from a clearer pedagogy with respect to the best approaches to the teaching of Chinese characters as a result of MEP.
- Teachers are conscious that this requirement for rote learning mustn't lead to boredom and demotivation, so sessions of vocabulary drilling and repetition are often mixed up with language games, quizzes, peer-to-peer practice and sometimes videos or singing, using for example YouTube Chinese Buddy (Chart 14). Teachers typically try to combine language learning with wider learning about Chinese culture to provide both broader understanding and a more varied and interesting lesson.

“ Game style activities and competitions work well with younger years.
Teacher

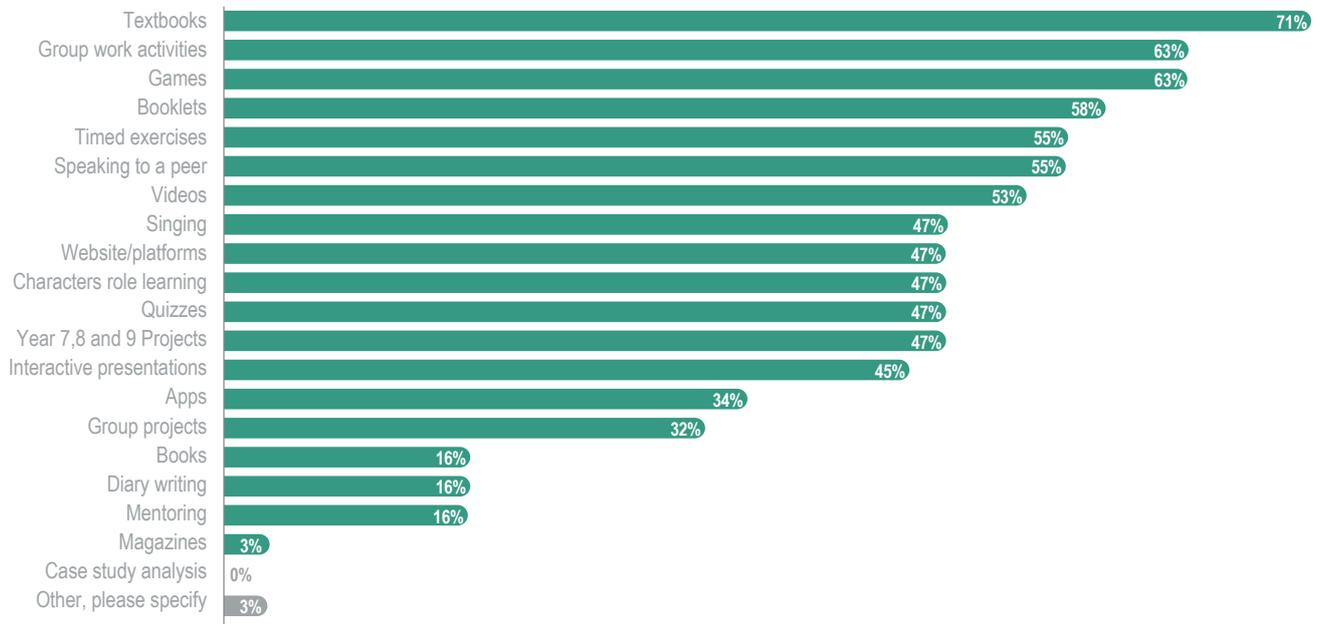
Encouraging students to create their own tasks in groups and then share them with the whole class.
Teacher ”

- Practising speaking in pairs by asking and answering questions in Mandarin is an approach used by many teachers, with some asking pupils to record their conversations and listen to their pronunciation.
- A minority of teachers teach more or less entirely in the target language but the amount of target language classroom time increases with the year groups. As discussed previously, Hanban teachers are becoming increasingly important in supporting the success of the Programme, in particular by providing opportunities for additional native language practice and supporting individuals and small groups with specific learning activities.



Chart 14 - Teachers consider textbooks, group work activities and games to be among the most effective approaches to teaching Mandarin in the classroom

What are the most effective teaching approaches and tools used within MEP at your school?
During taught classroom time



Source: MEP Staff Survey 2019/20, Fieldwork and analysis by Research Stories
Base: All teachers involved in MEP (38): NB: Small sample size

- Within the classroom there is relatively limited direct use of apps and web platforms but these are being widely used outside of the classroom. The structure and focus of this out-of-classroom learning is markedly different to that within the classroom. The emphasis is very much on project work and practice and consolidation through the use of platforms and apps (Chart 15).
- Most teachers consciously use a significant amount of the out of hours study time for the project-based learning and opportunities to explore the wider culture of China. Teachers often say that the projects provided by UCL IOE for Years 7, 8, 9 are very helpful and that pupils are generally enthusiastic about working on them. On occasions, this project focus helps to manage potential tension in schools which otherwise have a no homework policy.
- An increasing number of schools have their own cross-school learning platforms such as Frog. MEP

teachers will upload resources and exercises on these for students to access at home. Many but not all MEP teachers also use Edmodo which is supported by IOE CI.

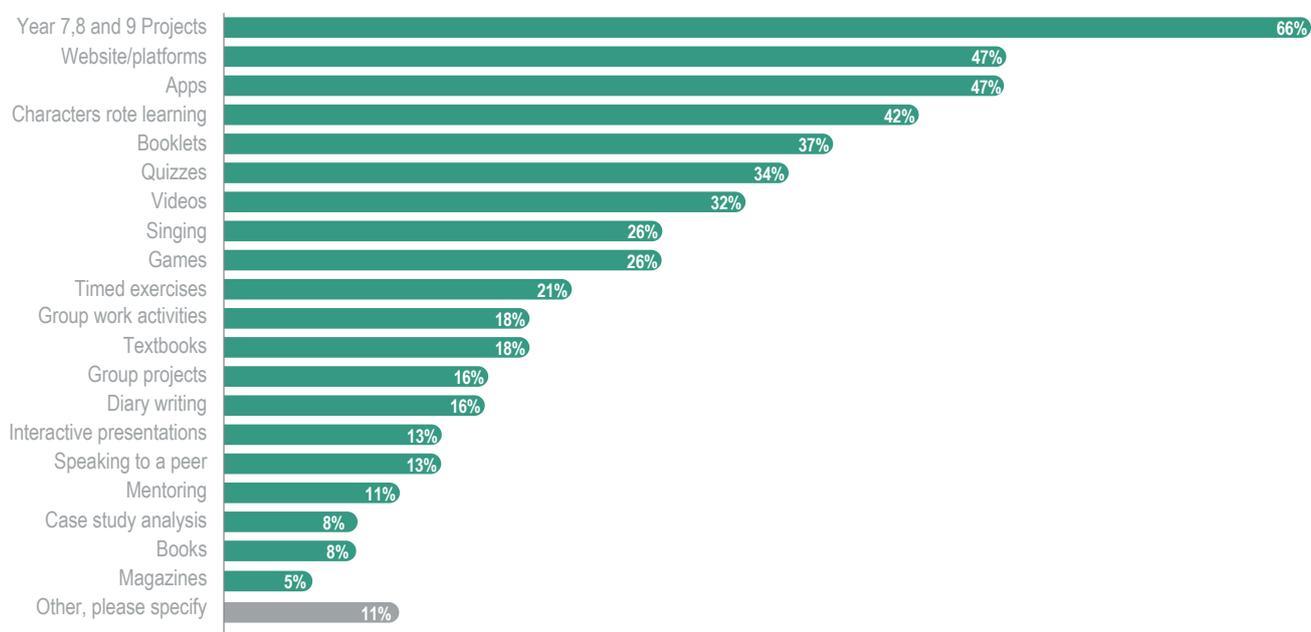
- More widespread is use of Mandarin-specific learning apps and resources to support home learning. Quizlet and GoChinese are by far the most commonly used. They allow remote learning in a fun way with heavy emphasis on interactivity and gaming. For example, all MEP students in the three schools in the Finham Park MAT are given a subscription to GoChinese and the school works with the provider to host relevant learning resources.

“ For homework we have started to do some flipped learning by using Quizlet to allow the students to learn vocabulary before they formally start learning it in the classroom.
Teacher ”

Chart 15 - Teachers consider projects and websites/apps to be among the most effective tools for teaching Mandarin outside of the classroom

What are the most effective teaching approaches and tools used within MEP at your school?

During out-of-classroom time



Source: MEP Staff Survey 2019/20, Fieldwork and analysis by Research Stories
Base: All teachers involved in MEP (38): NB: Small sample size

- Other apps and platforms used include:
 - The Chairman's Bao
 - Hello Chinese
 - Decipher Chinese
 - Hacking Chinese
 - Hanlexon
 - Ipandarin
 - memrise.com
 - Scritter (an app focused on character writing)
 - Kahoot (a game-based platform)
 - Pleco (an online dictionary)
 - Gimkit (a live quiz learning game)
- Some teachers monitor compliance with the self-study hours very carefully, on occasions asking parents to sign-off on home study hours each week. An increasing number monitor engagement indirectly through use of the apps and online platforms.
- Many teachers recognise that 8 hours is a very significant burden of time, especially for Year 7 children, and some tacitly accept that many children will spend perhaps 2 or 3 hours per week on self-guided study, rather than the full four, and they focus more on the outcomes than the process. As the first cohort of MEP students reaches Year 10, there is also a realism among teachers about the wider time pressures which students face in preparation for GCSEs.

11. Future Sustainability

Do participating schools have sustainable practices in place to continue teaching Mandarin beyond 2021? What are the key barriers and enablers for sustainability of the Programme?

- The issue of sustainability is really two different questions:
 - Do schools have sustainable practices in place to continue teaching Mandarin to new generations of students in KS3 and KS4 beyond 2021?
 - Do schools have sustainable practices in place to allow the current generation of MEP students to build on their knowledge of Mandarin in KS5?
- The 2016/2017 cohort of schools now has students in Year 10, while the 2019/2020 cohort only has Year 7s, so the urgency of these two questions is different for different schools.
- In terms of the first question, schools are on a spectrum of progress towards a sustainable, accelerated Mandarin Programme for KS3 and KS4 with a small majority (23 out of 41 responding) saying that on balance they are on-track. But the results vary markedly by length of experience in the Programme, with a far higher share of original cohort schools saying they are on track and a lower percentage of later cohort schools saying so.
- A large majority of school leaders say that they would like to continue with MEP in their school but almost all say that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to continue with a Programme as rich and intensive as MEP without continued funding.

“ We will continue to teach Mandarin but would have to revert back to the standard hours we give to MFL subjects if the funding was not continued for MEP. If funding is guaranteed, we would continue to use the intensive learning model indefinitely. ”
Headteacher/School leader

- If additional funding for MEP were to cease after 2021 almost all would still continue with Mandarin. Only three of 41 schools responding say that in those circumstances they would be likely to cease teaching Mandarin at all, confirming the finding from our Wave 1 report that schools who have entered the Programme have done so as part of a long term commitment to the language based on a belief in its importance for children in the 21st century. They have implemented Mandarin on the

curriculum through MEP, they have recruited teachers and acquired resources and they see Mandarin now as a fixed element of the curriculum.

“ Mandarin is firmly established in our school now. ”
Headteacher/School leader

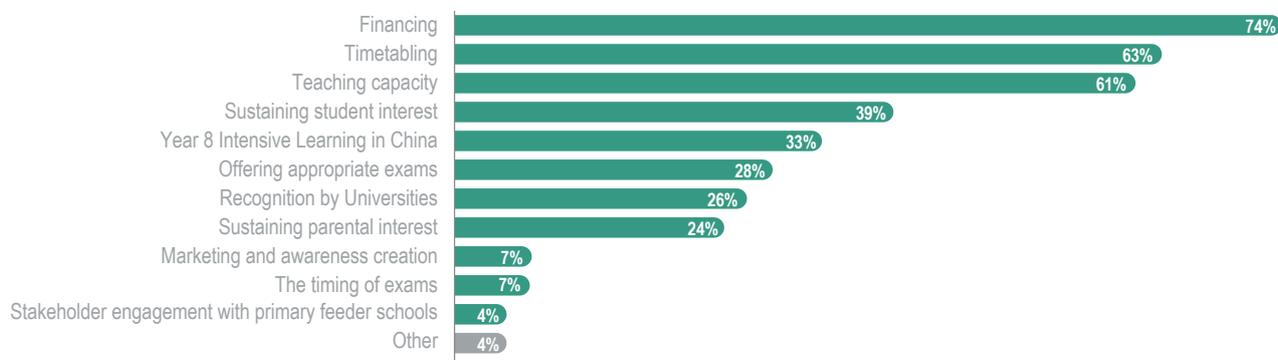
- However, only two of the 41 schools say that they could continue with a Programme of a similar intensity to MEP, with the majority saying that that they would most likely continue with a Mandarin Programme more similar in intensity to other modern foreign languages offered in the school.
- The perceived challenges to maintaining an intensive and accelerated Programme are very clearly illustrated in Chart 16. Finance and teaching capacity are different perspectives on resources. Timetabling is the inherent challenge to delivery within the curriculum.

“ Experience so far has been good. However, much depends on the funding and if that is cut we would have to reevaluate how we deliver Mandarin. ”
Headteacher/School leader

The intensity is difficult to sustain for timetabling reasons. We [would] hope to continue to grow the Mandarin department but as one of the normal language options. ”
Teacher

Chart 16 – Financing, timetabling and teaching capacity are seen as the biggest barriers to accelerated Mandarin learning over the longer term

What are the key challenges when planning for accelerated Mandarin learning in the long term?



Source: MEP Staff Survey 2019/20, Fieldwork and analysis by Research Stories
Base: Heads, Deputy Heads, Heads of MFL, and Heads of Mandarin (46): NB: Small sample size

- The second question around sustainability is a product of the success of MEP so far. It does appear to be creating a sizeable cohort of young people on the path to fluency in Mandarin but when they reach the end of KS4, what happens then? How do they build on their strong foundations through KS5 and into university?
- We have discussed that many of the schools within MEP are high achieving and that within these schools it is often the more able students who participate. These schools typically expect a small number of students to want to take Mandarin as a major subject in KS5 and that the majority will focus on other A-Levels in preparation for university entry in subjects such as Medicine, Law or Engineering. Schools and parents appear keen that these students have some option to pursue Mandarin alongside their major subjects.
- Most of the schools with students in Year 9 and Year 10 aspire to offer some Mandarin course at KS5 where they have sixth-form in the school. Several have already started to offer courses to KS5 students without previous knowledge of the language typically geared towards students obtaining a HSK 2 or 3 qualification. One school is proposing to enter Year 9 MEP students for HSK2 alongside Year 12/13 new learners in order to give both an additional, recognised qualification.

“ We have a year 12 introduction to Mandarin class.
Teacher

Post 16 students also have the opportunity to learn Mandarin toward the HSK certificate.
Teacher ”



- The challenge to sustaining the momentum of MEP post-GCSE into KS5 is the very widely held belief among teachers that there is no sensible exams pathway either for students who wish to continue to focus on Mandarin or for those who wish to study it as an adjunct to other subjects. The existing A-level is generally held to be unsuitable and unfair while the Cambridge Pre-U is widely valued, especially for its project orientation, but is being discontinued from 2023.
- A majority of MEP teachers are very keen for the Pre-U to be reprinted but unless it is, many schools remain unsure of what they should offer. One or two are still prepared to offer A-level and a few which offer the IB are considering IB qualifications but most are considering HSK 4,5 simply because they see no alternative. The challenge to HSK is that while it is recognised for entry into a university in China it carries no UCAS points and currently has little recognition within UK universities.
- We are aware of ongoing discussions between the IOE Confucius Institute for Schools and the DfE around these issues and the even wider issue of the potential expansion of opportunities to continue to study Mandarin at university alongside other major subjects.

“ We are in a dilemma if the Pre-U goes with no appropriate alternative.
Headteacher/School leader

With the removal of Cambridge papers [Pre-U] - none unless there is an alternative route to A levels. Outside of curriculum HSK could be an option.
Headteacher/School leader ”



12. Conclusions and Recommendations

- Our evaluation of The Mandarin Excellence Programme paints a very positive picture.
- Since our first report, the Mandarin Excellence Programme (MEP) has expanded to engage 76 schools across England and more than 5,000 children. A majority of schools joining the Programme are introducing Mandarin onto the curriculum for the first time.
- MEP remains on track against its output targets and is achieving its overall ambition of creating a cohort of students in UK state schools on the path to fluency in Mandarin.
- Feedback from teachers and school leaders within the Programme remains overwhelmingly positive about the impact through accelerated and improved learning outcomes, the boost to self-esteem and confidence for students and the reputation enhancement for schools. By increasing opportunities for training, MEP is also supporting wider initiatives to improve the supply of Mandarin teachers in the country.
- The focus on excellence has led naturally to a focus on high achieving schools and high achieving students, although there is a minority of schools within the Programme in relatively deprived catchment areas. Participating schools are generally clustered in main population centres, in part as a result of the recruitment of multiple schools within a MAT.
- The overall structure of the Programme is well regarded by participating schools and the different elements are seen to work positively together. As the number of schools new to Mandarin has increased, the value of the Intensive Study Periods and the quality of support available through IOE CI has become more widely appreciated.
- Timetabling remains the key operational challenge to the delivery of MEP.
- Almost all participating schools are committed to retaining Mandarin on the curriculum in the future but few believe that they would be able to sustain an intensive Programme similar to MEP in the absence of continued funding for the Programme.
- Many schools wish to offer a continuation programme to MEP students in KS5 but there is widespread concern about the absence of suitable exams pathways, especially with the phasing out of the Cambridge Pre-U.
- MEP will continue in a steady state in 2020/2021, so our recommendations consider some of the wider issues raised by the success to date of MEP. Given the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic there is an obvious desire among schools to understand the impact on the Programme for 2020/2021 but at the time of writing this report we recognise that some of these issues are still being worked out.
- Extension of funding into 2020/2021 has been welcomed by participating schools. Clarity about funding beyond that will make planning by schools easier, especially given the current disruption to all school activities.
- The Hub and Spoke model of support is the one element of the Programme which has not been universally effective. Going forward, it may be best to identify schools which feel they do not need support and take them out of the Hub and Spoke model so as to focus resources. There are some Hub schools which have provided very good support and with this greater concentration of resources it may be possible to allow them to concentrate more on helping schools which genuinely need assistance. Greater use of technology such as Teams and Zoom may also help to alleviate the challenge of distance between Hub and Spoke schools.
- In general, support needs to be focused on MEP schools with only one Mandarin teacher. It is these schools which are most at risk if problems occur and it is these schools which can benefit most from support from both IOE CI and their Hub school.
- The Hanban Teacher Programme is independent of MEP but its role in supporting the delivery of MEP has become increasingly clear. As far as possible, Hanban resources in MEP schools need to be concentrated in schools with one teacher and/or non-native speaking teachers. Further resource sharing of Hanban teachers within MATs and between Hub and Spoke schools should be encouraged.
- We have noted that almost every school has a different approach to recruiting children into MEP and a different model for arranging the timetable to accommodate MEP. While acknowledging that every school is different, further sharing of experience from the earlier cohort schools may allow more recent schools to avoid some mistakes and develop a model which works for them more quickly and efficiently.

- The Covid-19 emergency is giving a natural boost to virtual meetings. A greater use of technology to increase engagement, networking and resource sharing and to reduce the pressures of travel time and cost will be broadly welcomed by staff involved in MEP. Again, this is particularly important for staff in relatively isolated schools and for schools far from London.
- The use of technology as a teaching and learning tool is an increasingly visible element of MEP, especially to support out-of-classroom study. Some aspects of Mandarin learning lend themselves particularly well to technology solutions. There are several implications of this:
 - A need to devote more time to sharing knowledge and experience of the many different platforms and apps available across MEP schools,
 - An opportunity to introduce additional training around technology. While many MEP teachers are relatively young and tech savvy, there is a minority who trained in a different context and some openly admit that they would benefit from greater understanding of the possibilities of new technology,
 - An opportunity at a Programme level to work more closely with technology providers to align content and resources to the needs of MEP. One or two individual schools are already doing this,
 - The potential to exemplify how technology is being used within MEP to respond to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- From a wider perspective, it is clear that relatively few MEP schools are in rural areas. The greater difficulty in sourcing teachers and providing support to more isolated schools explains this gap. Technology will be a crucial enabler if MEP, or Mandarin learning more generally, is going to be introduced in a wider group of schools across the country, including in rural areas.
- The success of MEP means that there is an urgent need to address exams pathways in KS5. From a teacher perspective, a reprieve of the Cambridge Pre-U would be a very positive step.
- We are aware of wider discussions outside MEP which are seeking to address these issues. These concern the role of the current A-Level exam and the wider positioning of Mandarin, including the possible recognition of HSK qualifications, within the UK HE sector.



