

Language Trends Wales 2016/17

The state of language
learning in secondary
schools in Wales



Language Trends Wales 2016/17

The state of language
learning in secondary
schools in Wales

Contents

About the British Council	3	3. Schools examination data in Wales	26
About the authors	4	GCSE	27
Acknowledgements	4	A level	29
		Entries for AS	31
Executive summary	5		
Key Findings	7	4. Survey findings	32
Examination entries	9	Take up for MFL in Key Stage 4	33
Take up	9	MFL post-16	39
Teaching staff	10	Teaching staff	43
Continuing Professional Development (CPD)	10	Support and Continuing Professional Development	47
Contact with Primary Schools	11	Contacts with primary schools	51
MFL and the Teaching of Welsh	11	MFL and the teaching of Welsh	53
International Engagement	11	International engagement	54
Issues of concern	12	Impact of Brexit	57
Conclusions	12	Issues of concern	58
1. Introduction	15	5. Conclusions	62
The policy context	16	Appendix – response profile	65
Global Futures	18		
Estyn	18		
Language Trends Wales	20		
2. Research design and data collection	22		
Analysis of examination data	23		
Development of the questionnaires	23		
Data collection	24		
Analysis of the data	25		

About the British Council

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and build trust between them worldwide.

We work in more than 100 countries and our 8,000 staff – including 2,000 teachers – work with thousands of professionals and policy makers and millions of young people every year by teaching English, sharing the arts and delivering education and society programmes.

We are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter. A core publicly-funded grant provides 16 per cent of our turnover which last year was £973 million. The rest of our revenues are earned from services which customers around the world pay for, such as English classes and taking UK examinations, and also through education and development contracts and from partnerships with public and private organisations. All our work is in pursuit of our charitable purpose and supports prosperity and security for the UK and globally.

For more information, please visit www.britishcouncil.org

About the authors

Teresa Tinsley established and developed the Language Trends series of surveys which have charted the health of languages in various sectors of education since 2002. As well as producing and analysing information on the situation of languages in English and Welsh secondary schools, the surveys have also covered provision for community languages across the UK, and language learning in Further and Adult Education. Formerly Director of Communications at CILT, the National Centre for Languages, Teresa founded Alcantara Communications in 2011 and since then has undertaken policy-focused research on languages for the British Academy and the British Council, as well as CfBT Education Trust. Her work for CfBT included an international review of primary languages, Lessons from abroad, as well as the Language Trends reports from 2011 to 2017.



Teresa Tinsley

Kathryn Board, OBE, was Chief Executive of CILT, The National Centre for Languages from 2008 and in that role worked with specialists and a wide range of educational institutions to provide advice on educational policy related to the teaching of languages as well as on initiatives aimed at increasing language learning across the UK. Before joining CILT, she spent 30 years working for the British Council in a number of international and management roles. She also led for Education Development Trust (formerly CfBT Education Trust) on the development of a languages strategy and the delivery of a number of national projects to support language teaching in English schools. Now partially retired, she continues to work on research projects where she can bring in her expertise. Kathryn speaks Spanish, German and Dutch and is currently working hard on improving her Arabic.



Kathryn Board, OBE

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the time and effort of all teachers who completed this year's survey and provided the researchers with such rich evidence and comments. The information that respondents have provided is vital in understanding the national picture and in developing the capacity of all of us to improve provision.

Executive summary



This third annual Language Trends survey of Modern Foreign Languages in Welsh secondary schools comes just eighteen months into the Welsh Government's five-year *Global Futures* plan to improve and promote Modern Foreign Languages in Wales, 2015-2020.¹

The plan responded to growing concerns about the diminishing status of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in Welsh schools and serious declines in the numbers of pupils taking the subject to GCSE and A level. Between 2002 and 2016 the number of pupils studying a foreign language to GCSE declined by 48 per cent, and at A level, numbers have declined by 44 per cent since 2001.

In order to address this challenging situation and to work towards the development of a future generation of young linguists who are able to contribute to the government's aspirations for a prosperous and outward looking Wales, the *Global Futures* plan is supporting a number of national initiatives aimed at improving and promoting MFL in Wales. Its ambition is for Wales to become a 'bilingual + 1 country'. On a wider scale, the Welsh Government has also embarked on an extensive programme of educational reform including the development of a new curriculum based on the recommendations of the Donaldson review, *Successful Futures*, the introduction of new GCSE and A levels and the Welsh Baccalaureate. *Language Trends Wales 2016/17* explores what is happening to foreign language teaching in secondary schools across Wales and the impact that the government's reforms and initiatives are having on MFL teachers and their pupils. In particular, our research looks at the regional consortia and centres of excellence established under the *Global Futures* plan and asks teachers how they are engaging with these now that they have been in operation for more than a year. We also seek teachers' feedback on the introduction of the new specifications for GCSEs and A levels in languages and on the outlook for MFL in schools as the UK prepares to leave the European Union.

The research presented in this report was commissioned by British Council Wales and is based on the analysis of online surveys completed by teachers in charge of MFL in secondary schools across the country. It was carried out between January and March 2017 and achieved a response rate of 56 per cent (118 responses from a total of 210 secondary schools in Wales).

Our last Languages Trends Wales report (2015/16) also included a survey of MFL in primary schools. This was intended to provide a benchmark study of MFL teaching in the primary phase to coincide with the decision of the Welsh Government to accept the recommendations of the Donaldson review, including his proposal to incorporate MFL into primary school education from 2020. As the implementation of this policy is still at a very early stage, we have not repeated the survey of primary schools in Wales in our 2016/17 research though we did include questions for secondary schools in order to provide quantitative and qualitative information to feed into the process.

Between 2002 and 2016 the number of pupils studying a foreign language to GCSE declined by 48 per cent, and at A level, numbers have declined by 44 per cent since 2001

¹*Global Futures. A plan to improve and promote modern foreign languages in Wales, 2015-2020* (Welsh Government, 2015)

Key Findings

- Take up of MFL at Key Stage 4 continues to fall, in both Years 10 and 11. The proportion of schools with more than 25 per cent of pupils taking a language in Key Stage 4 has declined to the extent that more than a third of schools now have fewer than ten per cent of Year 10 pupils taking the subject. The continuing decline is attributed mainly to the predominance of compulsory subjects and the introduction of the Welsh Baccalaureate which has reduced the number of free option slots available to pupils.
- The situation for MFL at post-16 is increasingly fragile, particularly in the context of financial constraints where schools cannot afford to run courses for small numbers. Some 44 per cent of schools have fewer than five pupils for AS courses, a figure which rises to 61 per cent in the case of schools with fewer than five pupils for A2. The perceived difficulty of both the AS and A level examinations, competition from other subjects and a diminishing pool of GCSE pupils to draw on are given as reasons for the declining numbers for modern languages at this level. These challenges are further exacerbated by the current financial pressures on schools.
- Nearly two thirds of MFL departments (64 per cent) have just one or two full time teachers and more than a third (36 per cent) have just one full time teacher. There is considerable reliance on non-British EU nationals for MFL teaching: as many as 34 per cent of schools employ language teachers from other member states either on a part-time or full-time basis.
- The *Global Futures* initiative has reached as many as 72 per cent of the schools who responded to this year's survey. Many teachers comment favourably on the support they have received, although responses also indicate that successful engagement is heavily dependent on the personality and effectiveness of the individuals heading up the particular regional consortium or centre of excellence.
- The types of support from the regional consortia or local centre of excellence which are most appreciated by teachers are subject specific CPD and the opportunity to share practice face to face with their peers. Support for the development of MFL in primary schools is the area which has so far been least exploited by schools and least appreciated by teachers.
- There are examples of good practice in supporting primary schools to lay a good foundation for MFL, which could be replicated more widely throughout the regional consortia network in order to support the aims of the *Global Futures* plan.
- Although one third of foreign language teachers are of the opinion that the teaching of Welsh and English in primary schools provides pupils with reasonable preparation for learning a foreign language starting in year 7, the majority (over 60 per cent) do not believe that the teaching of either language in Key Stage 2 supports the subsequent acquisition of a third language.
- Four out of five schools (82 per cent) report that they organise trips abroad for their pupils. However, there is also evidence that pupil exchanges are being adversely affected by an increasing disinclination on the part of parents and pupils to stay in other people's homes and, in some cases, because of concerns about security risks and uncertain political situations.

As many as 34 per cent of schools employ language teachers from other member states either on a part-time or full-time basis.



- Teachers of MFL feel overwhelmed by a range of factors including changes to the options system, new GCSE and A level specifications, the introduction of the Welsh Baccalaureate and a reduction in teaching hours for MFL. They also feel frustrated by the apparent lack of support and understanding from school based leaders. They believe that the national apathy towards languages and other cultures is largely to blame for the current state of MFL in schools and urge the government, school leaders, specialist organisations and other influential bodies to speak out more loudly for the benefits of languages to society and individuals.

These findings are discussed in more detail below.

Examination entries

An analysis of publicly available examination data reveals that the number of pupils from Welsh schools taking a GCSE in a modern foreign language in 2016 has declined to around 52 per cent of the numbers sitting the same exams in 2002. In just the twelve months between 2015 and 2016, entries for French GCSE declined by more than 10 per cent and those for Spanish by nearly 18 per cent. However, entries for German over the same period, although exceedingly small in number, showed an impressive 19 per cent increase.

At A level, the picture for modern foreign languages is particularly bleak with entries for each of the main European languages continuing to show a steep decline in entry numbers. The twelve-month period between 2015 and 2016 shows a further overall decline of 10 per cent. Seen in a context in which entries for A level subjects generally have grown by seven per cent since 2001, it is particularly alarming to note that entries for modern foreign languages have declined by 44 per cent over the same period.

Take up

The findings from this year's research suggest that entry figures for GCSE are likely to continue to drop in 2017 and in 2018. The proportion of schools with fewer than 10 per cent of pupils taking MFL in Year 10 is rising: from below one quarter (24 per cent) in 2016 to more than one third (36 per cent) in 2017. A small number of schools have increased numbers for MFL, but the proportion of schools recruiting more than 50 per cent of pupils for the subject is still very low, at six per cent.

Quantitative and qualitative evidence from the survey reveals a complex set of reasons for the continuing decline in pupil numbers for modern foreign languages. These include the reduction of option blocks from which pupils choose their GCSE subjects from four to three and the introduction of the Welsh Bacc for all pupils. A bi-product of these changes is that modern languages find themselves struggling under a predominance of compulsory subjects and in competition with a wide range of popular subjects such as PE, music and drama, which are generally seen by pupils as easier and more fun than a challenging and academic subject such as French, German or Spanish. A number of teachers report that the requirement to study Welsh to GCSE level is seen by many school leaders as well as pupils as meeting the need to include a language in their portfolio of subjects.

At A level, the picture for modern foreign languages is particularly bleak with entries for each of the main European languages continuing to show a steep decline in entry numbers.

In the small minority of schools showing higher levels of take up for modern languages at Key Stage 4 or success at increasing the numbers of pupils opting to study the subject, this is the result of intensive promotional campaigns, sometimes supported by local centres of excellence or regional consortia established under the government's five-year *Global Futures* plan.

At post-16, only 66 schools of the schools in our survey offer teaching in modern languages. Those schools which have post-16 pupils but do not offer MFL cite low take up, consortium arrangements with other schools and financial constraints on small groups as reasons why they do not. Looking in more detail at the reasons why pupils choose not to study a foreign language at this level, it is clear that competition with STEM subjects is having an adverse impact on modern languages as well as the belief that it is harder to get the highest grades in an A level language than it is for other academic subjects. More than half of those schools who do offer modern languages at post-16 are running A2 courses with fewer than five pupils. As many as two thirds of schools (65 per cent) say numbers for MFL at post 16 are in decline and the majority of teachers reporting declines comment that their school is rapidly nearing the point where they will no longer be able to offer languages at this level. Urgent action is therefore needed not only to boost numbers for GCSE, but to ensure that sufficient numbers of pupils progress to post-16 study so that the viability of the subject can be safeguarded.

Teaching staff

The majority of MFL departments in Welsh schools are small, often with only one or two full-time teachers, and many schools are dependent on part-time staff. As many as one third of schools depend on non-British EU nationals for their MFL provision, either in a full-time or part-time capacity. This latter point is of particular concern following the UK's decision in the 2016 referendum to leave the EU because of the uncertainty as to whether such individuals will be able to remain to work in the UK once negotiations to leave the EU are complete.

In the 2016/17 research we were interested in assessing the extent to which language assistants are used in Welsh schools and also to ascertain whether those schools with direct experience of language assistants regard their input as having played a valuable role in enriching the school's MFL offer. More than half of schools (57 per cent) reported having employed a language assistant at some point in the past though financial constraints and falling numbers of pupils have reduced this figure to 16 per cent. The majority of schools with direct experience of language assistants rate their impact on pupils positively, particularly in the areas of cultural awareness and raising pupils' confidence with oral skills.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

The ability of teachers to refresh and maintain their subject knowledge through regular CPD is vital to the health of the teaching profession. In our research we were keen to learn about the type and frequency of subject specific CPD which MFL teachers have the opportunity to engage in and to determine the degree to which the new centres of excellence and regional consortia, set up as part of the government's *Global Futures* initiative, are being effective in leading professional development

The majority of schools with direct experience of language assistants rate their impact on pupils positively, particularly in the areas of cultural awareness and raising pupils' confidence with oral skills.

for teachers of MFL. As many as 72 per cent of teachers responding to our survey commented that they had received some kind of support from the new centres in the last year. The responses also revealed that regular participation in CPD arranged and delivered internally within school has increased from 28 per cent of schools last year to 36 per cent of schools this year. More than half of schools (54 per cent) regularly send at least one MFL teacher to attend training provided by the exam boards and around half regularly attend network meetings with other schools organised by the local authorities, local centres of excellence or regional consortia. There is very little take up of webinars, on-line training or peer training using social media.

Contact with Primary Schools

Following on from our benchmark study of MFL teaching in primary schools in 2015, we were keen to follow up on this research with further questions about secondary/primary liaison with the secondary teachers participating in this year's research. This year's survey reveals that little has changed since last year with only around a half of secondary schools having contact with any/some of their primary feeders. Financial constraints, workload and geographical obstacles are cited as reasons why contact is not more widespread. It is also interesting to note that both the quantitative and qualitative evidence from our research indicates that primary focussed CPD provided by the new centres for excellence/regional consortia is the least exploited so far by schools and the least appreciated by those who have encountered it. Funding seems to be a key issue if more schools are to be encouraged to replicate and build on the pockets of good practice and enthusiasm which certainly exist, since there is evidence that some of the positive impact gained through former projects funded by the Welsh Government has been lost in recent years as funding has been withdrawn. It is also evident that more could be done to integrate discussion about MFL into transition arrangements for Welsh and English.

This year's survey reveals that little has changed since last year with only around a half of secondary schools having contact with any/some of their primary feeders.

MFL and the Teaching of Welsh and English

Very few teachers in our survey are of the view that the teaching of English or Welsh in primary schools is good preparation for starting a foreign language in Year 7. Many bemoan the fact that pupils come to them in Year 7 having studied both English and Welsh throughout primary school but still with very poor grammatical knowledge and unable to make links between the vocabulary and structures of languages to support the acquisition of a MFL. However, there is undoubtedly a body of expertise, particularly in Welsh medium schools, which could be drawn on to improve the situation as the Donaldson curriculum is developed.

International Engagement

For many decades schools have relied on a variety of initiatives, including school links, exchange visits and overseas trips to motivate pupils in their learning of a foreign language and to give them, often their first, direct exposure to the language in the country in which it is spoken. More than four out of five schools (82 per cent) in our survey say that they organise foreign trips for pupils. However, the qualitative evidence provided by respondents to this year's Language Trends survey suggests that financial constraints, lack of pupil interest and a dislike of 'staying with strangers'

are beginning to have an adverse effect on schools' ability to give their pupils international encounters. The level of international engagement varies greatly between schools: while some schools are not involved in any type of international activity (e.g. school links or trips abroad), others offer multiple ways for pupils to engage with the world beyond Wales. Schools working in more advantaged socio-economic circumstances are more likely to offer a range of such activities for pupils.

Issues of concern

Secondary-based teachers of MFL in Wales are very concerned for the future of their subject and see changes such as the reduction of GCSE option columns and timetabled tuition time for MFL, the introduction of the Welsh BaccaLaureate and the perceived difficulty of MFL as threats to the long-term viability of their subject which they are helpless to address. The national apathy towards foreign languages and cultures exacerbates the situation and teachers would welcome more explicit intervention as well as more overt support for the benefits of foreign languages from those who have the authority to affect change.

The majority of schools report that they have not yet seen any changes in pupil attitude or take up as a result of the UK's decision in 2016 to leave the EU. However, those who do report having seen changes, comment that the impact has been negative both on pupils' views of the importance of learning a foreign language and on staff confidence in the country's wish to employ non-British EU nationals.

The majority of schools report that they have not yet seen any changes in pupil attitude or take up as a result of the UK's decision in 2016 to leave the EU.

Conclusions

1. The situation and prospects for MFL remain extremely challenging with interventions mitigating the impact of underlying problems rather than achieving systemic change

Teachers of MFL report feeling overwhelmed by a range of factors including changes to the options system, new GCSE and A level specifications, the introduction of the Welsh BaccaLaureate and a reduction in teaching hours for MFL, and are extremely concerned for the future of their subject. The outlook for MFL looks even more fragile in the context of financial pressures on schools and the potential impact of leaving the European Union.

Take up of MFL in Key Stage 4 continues to fall, in both Year 10 and Year 11, indicating that numbers for GCSE will decline further in 2017 and 2018. The main reasons given for declining numbers are the predominance of compulsory subjects and the introduction of the Welsh BaccaLaureate which has reduced the number of free option slots. The situation for MFL at post 16 is extremely fragile and becoming more so in a climate of financial constraints where schools cannot afford to run courses for very small numbers of pupils. The difficulty of the AS and AL examinations, competition from other subjects, and a smaller pool of GCSE students to draw on are given as reasons for declining numbers for MFL post-16.

MFL provision is being further threatened by an underlying shortage of teachers, a situation which is likely to become critical if the supply of teachers from other EU countries runs dry post-Brexit – some 34 per cent of schools are reliant on such

teachers to provide MFL teaching. The erosion of the subject over a number of years has meant that most MFL departments are very small, just one or two teachers, and some schools are relying on teachers who are not qualified in the subject to bridge gaps. Small numbers for MFL and small departments dependent on unqualified or part-time teachers can lead to a downward spiral for the subject as expertise is eroded, training opportunities are more difficult to access, and the profile of the subject within the school shrinks. Once there is an expectation that numbers for the subject will be low, this can be compounded by the way that option blocks are structured.

All these factors are weighted against the best efforts of teachers, regional coordinators and partners in the *Global Futures* initiative to promote the subject. It seems unlikely that step change will be achieved without addressing the manifold systemic issues which prevent wide-scale participation in the subject beyond the most basic level. The most significant of these are the inferior status of MFL in relation to English and Welsh, the amount of curriculum time available in relation to the difficulty of the exams, and the perceived value for careers in relation to other subjects. School leaders will need to be part of the mix in addressing these issues at system level in tandem with the development of the new curriculum.

2. *Global Futures* is already having some impact and the work of the regional consortia is appreciated by MFL teachers

The Welsh Government should be pleased that as many as 72 per cent of schools participating in this year's *Language Trends* survey report having received support from their regional consortium or centre of excellence. Teachers comment favourably on the support they have received and have particularly appreciated opportunities for CPD in MFL and to share practice with others face-to-face. This is a tribute to the particular individuals heading up some of the regional consortia. The *Global Futures* plan has undoubtedly already shown some successful impact and a small number of schools are reporting increases in numbers both at Key Stage 4 and post-16. Where this has been the case, it has been the result of strenuous efforts by schools and regional consortia.

The offer of support for the development of MFL in primary schools is the area which has been least exploited or appreciated by schools so far and this remains a key area for development. At the same time, there is the more urgent challenge of safeguarding the position of the subject in Key Stage 4 and beyond before a tipping point is reached where schools are no longer able to offer the subject and expertise is lost. It seems evident that significantly more resource and effort will be needed to realise these two interconnected demands.

Once there is an expectation that numbers for the subject will be low, this can be compounded by the way that option blocks are structured.

3. The development of the new National Curriculum for Wales provides a unique opportunity to develop 'triple language' with the same status and value as 'triple science'

The main systemic problem to be overcome is the predominance of compulsory subjects and the extra time being given to Welsh, English and Maths which is crowding out the place of MFL in the Welsh curriculum. This casts MFL in opposition to Welsh and English instead of capturing the potential for all language subjects to support each other. The responses to our survey show how much work there is to be done to develop the teaching of English and Welsh at primary school level as a supportive foundation for the subsequent learning of foreign languages: with over 60 per cent of teachers in our survey considering that it currently provides little or no preparation. This is the challenge which must now be overcome as the new Area of Learning and Experience in Languages, Literacy and Communication is developed. The next few years provide a unique opportunity to remedy the situation, drawing on the expertise of teachers who have a deep understanding of the potential of bilingualism to benefit the learning of third and subsequent languages, especially but in no sense exclusively in Welsh medium schools. The Welsh Government should build on this expertise in recasting MFL as an essential element within the new curriculum area, promoting the achievement of 'triple language' qualifications, after the model of 'triple science', as an aspiration for all. In doing so it will be able to draw on the appetite for change which is evident in MFL teachers' heartfelt appeals for greater public support for their subject.

The transformation necessary to achieve the vision of making Wales 'bilingual plus one', requires a scale of effort and public profile of a significantly greater order than is evident at present. It must draw in the support of school leaders, specialist organisations and other influential bodies throughout Wales and beyond.

The transformation necessary to achieve the vision of making Wales 'bilingual plus one', requires a scale of effort and public profile of a significantly greater order than is evident at present.

Chapter 1

Introduction



*'Language skills are often a valuable asset to businesses that export around the world and for those young people equipped with modern languages, it can open up real opportunities. We need to find ways to encourage more students to take-up modern languages by showing just how useful it can be to their careers.'*²

Pippa Morgan, head of CBI Education and Skills

The policy context

Wales is undertaking a long-term process of curricular reform and improvement in the quality of teaching and learning in its schools. Its efforts and progress to date were recently praised in an OECD report which encouraged Wales' continued development towards achieving its aims of greater quality and equity in the education system.³ The report also recommended strengthening and bringing greater coherence to the various reform initiatives being undertaken.

In relation to Modern Foreign Languages, since 2015 the Welsh Government has been involved in implementing a programme called *Global Futures*. This is intended to improve achievement and quality in schools and is designed to dovetail with and support wider educational reforms in the curriculum, in teacher training and in skills.⁴ When the new national curriculum for Wales, as recommended by Professor Graham Donaldson, is introduced from September 2021, the subject currently known as 'Modern Foreign Languages' which currently appears only at secondary level, will become part of a new Area of Learning and Experience from age 3 to 16. 'Languages, literacy and communication' will embrace both English and Welsh as well as new languages; however, previous Language Trends surveys have highlighted the fact that these subjects are currently seen as quite separate, and it is recognised that there will need to be significant development work, linked to the next phase of *Global Futures*, to make this a reality.

In September 2016, new 'made in Wales' GCSE, AS and A level syllabuses for Modern Languages were introduced. These are distinctively Welsh in terms of content and have been designed to meet the requirements of the Welsh Baccalaureate, which is now compulsory for all pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 and in the Sixth Form. A reform of teacher training is also under way and Modern Foreign Languages are among the subjects included in a scheme to attract more graduates into teaching in Wales, with bursaries of up to £15,000 available.⁵

Wales is undertaking a long-term process of curricular reform and improvement in the quality of teaching and learning in its schools.

²Commenting on decline in numbers taking A levels in Modern Foreign Languages, August 2016: <http://www.cbi.org.uk/news/talent-and-determination-on-show-a-level-results-day/>

³OECD, *The Welsh Education Reform Journey*, 2017: <http://www.oecd.org/education/wales-should-continue-reforms-to-boost-quality-and-equity-of-school-system.htm> (accessed 4/5/2017)

⁴Qualified for Life; Donaldson, *Successful Futures*, 2015;

⁵<http://gov.wales/newsroom/educationandskills/2017/financial-incentives-to-attract-graduates-into-teaching-announced-kirsty-williams/?lang=en> (accessed 2/5/2017)

Since our last Language Trends survey, the UK has embarked on a process to readjust its relationships with the rest of the world as a result of the vote to withdraw from the European Union. It is not yet known how radical this readjustment will be and how it will affect our relationships with the countries whose languages are most commonly taught in Welsh schools, namely French, German and Spanish. The Brexit process has highlighted differences between the four UK nations in terms of the expected impact of leaving the European Union and the Welsh Government, jointly with Plaid Cymru, has published a White Paper setting out the importance for Wales of retaining access to the Single Market.⁶ Germany is Wales' biggest market for exports and two thirds of Welsh exports go to the European Union.⁷ Wales' largest incoming tourist market is France.⁸ Wales seeks to raise its profile internationally as a first-class place to live, study, visit and do business, and has a particular interest in promoting itself as a host for international events. The most recent report by the UK Commission on Employment and Skills found that employers rate skills gaps in foreign languages among job applicants as more severe than gaps in Welsh oral or written skills. The gaps for foreign languages are most severe in South East Wales.⁹

Across the UK as a whole, a Populus survey conducted following the referendum vote found that around two thirds of respondents (63 per cent) see the ability to speak foreign languages as being essential if the UK is to successfully reach out to other countries once it leaves the EU.¹⁰ The University of Cambridge has published a series of blogs on the importance of languages in post-Brexit Britain, and in Parliament, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Languages has highlighted some key issues for Britain's language capacity arising from the referendum vote. These include the current practice of recruiting EU nationals to jobs requiring language skills (including as teachers of languages) and the importance of the Erasmus+ education programme for supporting exchanges and periods of residence abroad for pupils, university students, teachers and trainee teachers.¹¹ Wales has been an active participant in EU funding programmes which support international engagement and language learning and Erasmus+ is an important component of its current strategies.

Concerns about the continuing supply of teachers from the EU, not just for Modern Foreign Languages but for all school subjects, have been echoed in press articles and this, combined with concerns expressed by Estyn about the supply of teachers of Modern Languages in Wales (see below), suggested that we should use the opportunity of the 2017 Language Trends survey to gather information about the extent to which Welsh schools rely on nationals from other EU countries for the teaching of foreign languages.¹² We were also keen to know what impact respondents had experienced, if any, on the teaching of MFL in their school as a result of the referendum vote.

The most recent report by the UK Commission on Employment and Skills found that employers rate skills gaps in foreign languages among job applicants as more severe than gaps in Welsh oral or written skills.

⁶Securing Wales' future: <http://gov.wales/newsroom/firstminister/2017/170123-brexit-plan/?lang=en> (accessed 4/5/2017)

⁷<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/welsh-exports/?lang=en> (accessed 4/5/2017)

⁸Barclays/Conlumino, *UK Tourism Dynamics: Wales, 2017*

⁹<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/uk-commission-employment-skills-employer-skills-survey/?lang=en>

¹⁰<https://www.britishcouncil.org/organisation/press/language-skills-more-vital-ever> [accessed 19/2/2017]

¹¹ <http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/discussion/opinion-brexit-and-the-importance-of-languages-for-britain>

¹²<https://www.britishcouncil.org/education/schools/support-for-languages/thought-leadership/appg/news/brexit-languages> [accessed 20/2/2017]

¹³<https://www.tes.com/news/school-news/breaking-news/exclusive-warning-brexit-could-drive-away-thousands-eu-teachers> [accessed 20/2/2017]

Global Futures

This third annual Language Trends survey of Modern Foreign Languages in Welsh secondary schools comes just eighteen months into the Welsh Government's five-year Global Futures plan to improve and promote Modern Foreign Languages in Wales, 2015-2020.¹³ The plan was a response to growing concerns about the diminishing status of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in Welsh schools and serious declines in the numbers of pupils taking the subject to GCSE and A level. Its aims focus on three key areas:

- **Uptake:** to increase the number of young people choosing to study MFL subjects at GCSE, A level (or their equivalents) and in higher education
- **Professional development:** to improve the teaching and learning experience of MFL for learners aged 7-19, building towards a 'bilingual plus 1' system where the formal teaching of an MFL will begin at Year 5
- **Attainment:** to maintain and improve on the attainment levels presently being achieved in MFL.

In December 2016, the Welsh Government published a report on the first year of the Global Futures plan, in which the new Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kirsty Williams, set out her support for the vision of equipping all learners in Wales to communicate effectively in other languages and to appreciate other cultures.¹⁴ Significant progress was reported in laying the foundations towards achieving the plan's ambitious aims which, the Cabinet Secretary observed, had never been more important than in the current external context, which she described as 'challenging'. An impressive range of activity was reported, including a mentoring scheme for Key Stage 3 pupils, run in partnership with four universities which had already proved successful in enabling one school to run a GCSE MFL option for the first time in three years. This scheme has now been expanded to a second phase, covering 44 schools and a third phase is also planned. Language learning resources focusing on Euro 2016 had been produced in partnership with the Football Association of Wales and these had proved popular with both primary and secondary schools. Many new, or expanded, activities and initiatives were being undertaken by partners including the Spanish Embassy, the Goethe Institute, Alliance Française, Confucius Institute, Italian Consulate and the British Council. The four regional education consortia had provided a range of professional development opportunities for MFL teachers and had continued to work closely with Routes into Languages Cymru, training pupils to become Language Ambassadors. There had also been pilot schemes aimed at combining digital literacy with MFL and Cardiff Council had been successful in securing Erasmus+ funding for 91 study visits to schools in other EU countries by Welsh teachers. The Welsh Government now aims to develop a pan-Wales application for Erasmus+ to support the next phase of its plan.

This third annual Language Trends survey of Modern Foreign Languages in Welsh secondary schools comes just eighteen months into the Welsh Government's five-year *Global Futures* plan to improve and promote Modern Foreign Languages in Wales, 2015-2020.

Estyn

In July 2016, Estyn published a report on the quality of MFL teaching and learning in Wales, its first since 2009.¹⁵ It brought forward new evidence which reinforced many of the findings from the Language Trends surveys of 2015 and 2014, and also made a number of important observations and recommendations:

¹³Global Futures. A plan to improve and promote modern foreign languages in Wales, 2015-2020 (Welsh Government, 2015)

¹⁴<http://gov.wales/newsroom/educationandskills/2016/58797598/?lang=en> (accessed 2/5/2017)

¹⁵<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/thematic-reports/modern-foreign-languages> (accessed 2/5/2017)



- Although the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level in MFL at the end of Key Stage 3 has increased (to 84 per cent), attainment in MFL is still lower than for any other subject except Welsh Second Language. Too little time is being dedicated to MFL in Key Stage 3 – while Estyn recommends at least two hours per week, schools only offer one and a half hours a week on average.
- Progression through the system from Key Stage 3 is very poor. Of the pupils who achieved the expected level in MFL at Key Stage 3 in 2011, only 28 per cent went on to take the GCSE in 2013 (this equates to only about one in five of all pupils). Of these, only eight per cent then continued to A level in 2015, less than two per cent of the original cohort.
- MFL is being squeezed by the focus on core subjects. Nearly all headteachers reported that ensuring broad and balanced opportunities for learners to study MFL is a challenge due to the increased requirement for learners to sit two examinations in both English and mathematics at key stage 4. This is particularly challenging in small schools, where the timetabling pressures of catering for a large number of subjects, as well as extra time for core subjects, mean that MFL classes often have to take place after the normal school day or at lunchtimes. The report recommended that schools review their curriculum planning and timetabling arrangements in order to improve uptake for MFL.
- The report found that learners were put off taking MFL because they saw it as harder than other subjects, and because of the value given to Welsh as a compulsory subject which left little space on the timetable for other subjects they wished to study. Some parents would like a wider choice of languages on offer, and for Welsh to be optional at Key Stage 4 in order to allow pupils greater choice.
- The lack of a language qualification with a business focus is a barrier for schools wishing to encourage pupils across the ability spectrum to study a language in Key Stage 4 and beyond.
- Initial teacher training centres struggled to recruit even half their quota of MFL trainee teachers in 2014/15. Schools with only small numbers of learners of MFL beyond Key Stage 3, and those in the West of Wales, often find it difficult to recruit teachers of MFL. There is also a concern that candidates for MFL teaching posts are only able to offer one language. Perhaps linked to this, the number of schools entering candidates for more than one foreign language has declined from 66 per cent in 2010 to 55 per cent in 2015.
- The number of schools appointing Foreign Language Assistants is decreasing because of cuts to school budgets.
- The structure of the CPD offer to schools has changed since the closure of CILT Cymru, but it is too early to say what impact the new arrangements have had.

Parents would like a wider choice of languages on offer, and for Welsh to be optional at Key Stage 4 in order to allow pupils greater choice.

Language Trends Wales

The key findings of the 2016 Language Trends Wales survey were that secondary schools were working hard to try to increase take up at Key Stage 4, but finding it a significant challenge. Estyn's recommended minimum of two hours of MFL provision per week was not being met in as many as 40 per cent of schools, leaving many pupils insufficiently prepared to begin a GCSE course and not confident that they would

be successful. The survey also found that, instead of complementing each other as language subjects, MFL and Welsh were competing for curriculum time and in some cases poor pupil experiences of Welsh in the primary school was having a negative effect on attitudes towards MFL.

This year's survey was designed both to build on the findings from previous years and to explore new issues deriving from policy developments both in education and more widely during the past year.

The ongoing question of take up for languages at Key Stage 4 is the central theme of this year's survey. We were particularly interested in take up for MFL in Year 10, where the many activities under way as part of the *Global Futures* plan might already be showing an impact. In the 2015 survey, we had asked MFL teachers what types of support they would most welcome from the centres of excellence created as part of the plan. This year we have explored this area further and asked specifically what support schools have received and the extent to which this had been beneficial. Given the very fragile situation for MFL post-16 reported last year, we have focused again on issues affecting MFL teaching and learning at A level.

The ongoing question of take up for languages at Key Stage 4 is the central theme of this year's survey.

Given the ambition of the *Global Futures* plan to start formal teaching of a Modern Foreign Language from Year 5, last year's survey gathered information from both primary and secondary schools on the extent of existing provision for MFL in Key Stage 2 and the resources available for expanding it. This was intended as a baseline survey at the start of the implementation of the *Global Futures* plan rather than as an annual survey and for this reason primary schools were not targeted again this year. However, the issue of language teaching in primary schools, and the extent to which the teaching of Welsh and English in Key Stage 2 support the learning of a new language in secondary school, is an important strand of enquiry in this year's survey. It is hoped that the results will be used to inform the development of the new curriculum Area of Learning Experience (AOLE) for Language, Literacy and Communication, and pilot initiatives being developed in the next phase of the *Global Futures* project.

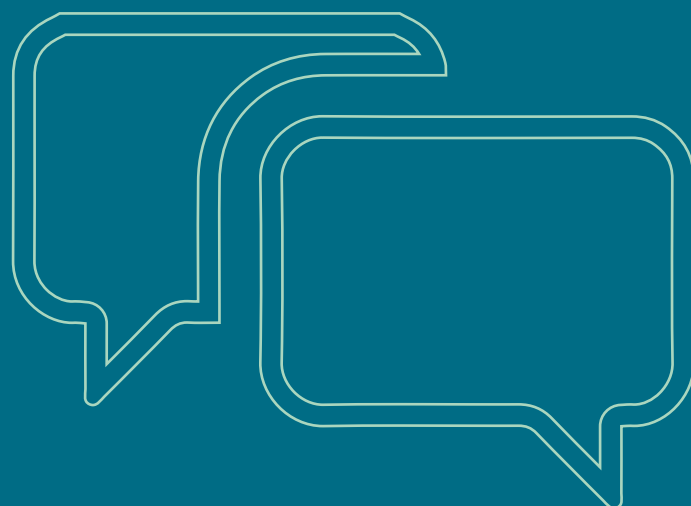
This year's survey also includes a number of new questions linked to international engagement in the context of the UK leaving the EU. These include questions on teacher supply and retention for MFL and the extent to which schools in Wales rely on citizens of other EU countries as MFL teachers. We also asked schools about the extent of their involvement in international activities and specifically whether the result of the referendum has yet had any impact on MFL teaching. As in other years, we also included an open question for teachers to comment on any other issue of concern not specifically included in the survey.

As in previous years' research, where there are sufficient responses to draw a statistically-valid conclusion, we have analysed results according to the socio-economic profile of the school, and by medium of instruction.

We have prefaced the results of the surveys with an analysis of the latest GCSE and A level examinations entries, highlighting trends in take up since 2002/2003.

Chapter 2

Research design and data collection



This is the third edition of the Language Trends survey of schools in Wales. Though similar surveys have been carried out in England annually since 2002, the first survey of Welsh schools took place in 2014/15, focussing exclusively on secondary schools.

In response to the Welsh Government's *Global Futures* plan, and the development of a new National Curriculum for Wales which would see the teaching of a modern foreign language (MFL) starting in primary schools, the second research exercise in 2015/16 gathered information from both primary and secondary schools on the current state of MFL teaching and views on potential future development. The focus of this third annual survey is once again specifically directed at secondary schools with the aim of providing evidence for policy development by acting as a two-way conduit between schools and government. The survey charts the impact of government policies in schools and at the same time reflects the views and experiences of MFL teachers as they adapt to changing contexts for foreign language teaching in schools.

The focus of this third annual survey is once again specifically directed at secondary schools with the aim of providing evidence for policy development by acting as a two-way conduit between schools and government.

Analysis of examination data

Entry and achievement figures for public examinations such as GCSE and A level provide one of the few comprehensive sources of national data on the situation of languages in secondary schools. The findings of the survey have therefore been prefaced by a presentation of examination data relating to foreign languages, thus setting the responses of schools within a broader context and enabling a more insightful interpretation. The data, provided by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ), comprises entries from learners of all ages and from all types of institution including schools, further education (FE) colleges and adult centres.

Development of the questionnaires

The questionnaires were developed during autumn 2016 by the researchers in consultation with an advisory group comprising representatives of the British Council Wales, Estyn, and the University of Cardiff/Routes into Languages Cymru. Consultations were also held with the Welsh Government. The questions were uploaded bilingually on to the online survey platform Survey Monkey and trialled in early January 2017.

The questionnaire sought to combine similar questions to those of previous years' surveys, in order to track trends over time, with some new questions shedding light on issues that had not previously been explored. Questions following on from previous years were:

- Whether all, or almost all pupils study a foreign language throughout Key Stage 3 (Years 7 to 9)
- What proportions of pupils, in schools with different profiles, are studying a MFL in Key Stage 4, and whether this has changed over the past three years or so
- How many slots for free option choices pupils have for GCSE courses, not counting compulsory subjects
- Whether any pupils are prevented from studying a foreign language in Key Stage 4
- The extent to which secondary schools are engaging with the Centres of Excellence created as part of the Welsh Government's *Global Futures* plan, and what they are gaining or hope to gain from them
- Foreign language teachers' involvement in CPD
- Whether secondary schools have contacts with their feeder primary schools in relation to MFL learning
- Current school trends in the take-up of foreign languages post 16
- Reasons why MFL numbers are increasing/declining at Post-16.

New questions sought to explore the following:

- Issues relating to teacher supply and recruitment:
 - o The size and make up of school MFL departments
 - o The extent to which Welsh schools rely on MFL teachers from other EU countries
 - o How easy schools find it to recruit and retain high quality teachers of MFL
 - o Whether schools employ/have ever employed Foreign Language Assistants and how they rate their impact on a range of areas
- The extent to which MFL teachers find that the teaching of Welsh and English in primary schools prepares pupils for learning a new language in Key Stage 3
- Whether the UK's decision to leave the EU has had any impact on the teaching of MFL
- The extent to which schools offer opportunities for international engagement, such as overseas trips or links with partner schools abroad.

Data collection

In January 2017, an email invitation to complete the online questionnaire was sent out in English and Welsh to all 210 secondary schools from the Director of the British Council Wales, addressed to the head of modern foreign languages.

A number of reminder emails were sent to non-responding schools, with a deadline of the end of the spring term for responses. Non-responding schools were then telephoned by bilingual staff who were able to explain the purposes and importance of the survey, and arrange for pdf versions of the questionnaire to be sent to those who preferred to respond by email or in hard copy. These responses were later transferred onto the Survey Monkey data base.

A total of 118 secondary schools responded, yielding a response rate of 56 per cent. This was slightly lower than that achieved in previous years but still sufficient to be broadly representative of the national profile of secondary schools in Wales. Comparisons of the achieved sample with the national population of schools were carried out, showing that the responding schools are a good match with schools nationally in terms of regional distribution, age range of pupils and school type. In terms of medium of instruction, English-medium schools are under-represented and bilingual schools slightly over-represented - see Appendix for full details.



A total of 118 secondary schools responded, yielding a response rate of 56 per cent.

Analysis of the data

Researchers were interested in exploring any patterns in the responses to the survey by different school characteristics including socio-economic status (based on the proportion of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), region, school type and medium of instruction). However, the relatively small sample means that when broken down further, the numbers of schools in each sub-sample are too small to provide any firm data on response variance between types of school. Nonetheless, the responses to a number of questions have been analysed in this way, and commentary included within the text where any pattern can be detected.

Chapter 3

Schools examination data in Wales



The figures shown below are taken from the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) entry statistics published in August each year and cover all GCSE and A level entries for Wales in each year, including those from further, adult and voluntary education providers.

The earliest figures available are for 2001, in the case of A level, and 2002, in the case of GCSE, while the latest figures available are those for summer 2016.

GCSE

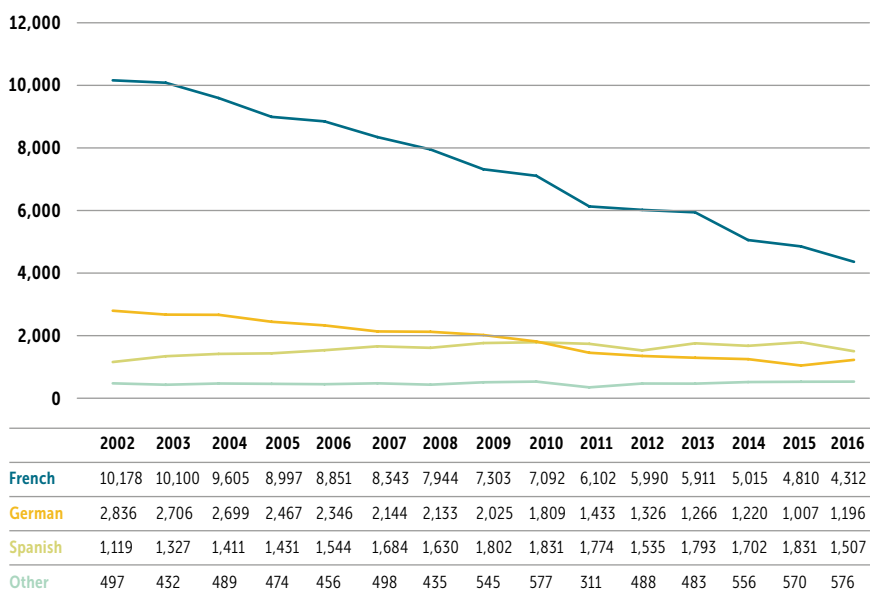
On publishing the results for Wales for summer 2016, JCQ reported a fall of 10.4 per cent in entries for French compared to 2015, a fall of 17.7 per cent in entries for Spanish but an increase of 18.8 per cent in entries for German.¹⁶ Entries for 'Other Languages' increased by one per cent (equivalent to six candidates). The significant decline in entries for French compounds a long-term trend. However, the fall in entries for Spanish, which has until now been more resilient than other foreign languages, sets the subject back to a lower level than seen for a decade. In contrast, although the increase in German compensates for the decline between 2014 and 2015, it still does not increase numbers for the subject beyond the level seen in 2014.

An analysis of trends in entries since 2002 shows that GCSE modern foreign languages are now taken by just over half the number of pupils (52 per cent) that were sitting them in 2002 – the total number of MFL entries having dropped from 14,630 from 7,591 over the 15-year period. While this must be seen in the context of a 13 per cent drop overall in the number of GCSE entries, it nevertheless means that the proportion of MFL entries in relation to all subject entries has dropped from five per cent to three per cent.

An analysis of trends in entries since 2002 shows that GCSE modern foreign languages are now taken by just over half the number of pupils (52 per cent) that were sitting them in 2002

¹⁶JCQ, *Wales GCSE Media Release*, 23 August 2016.

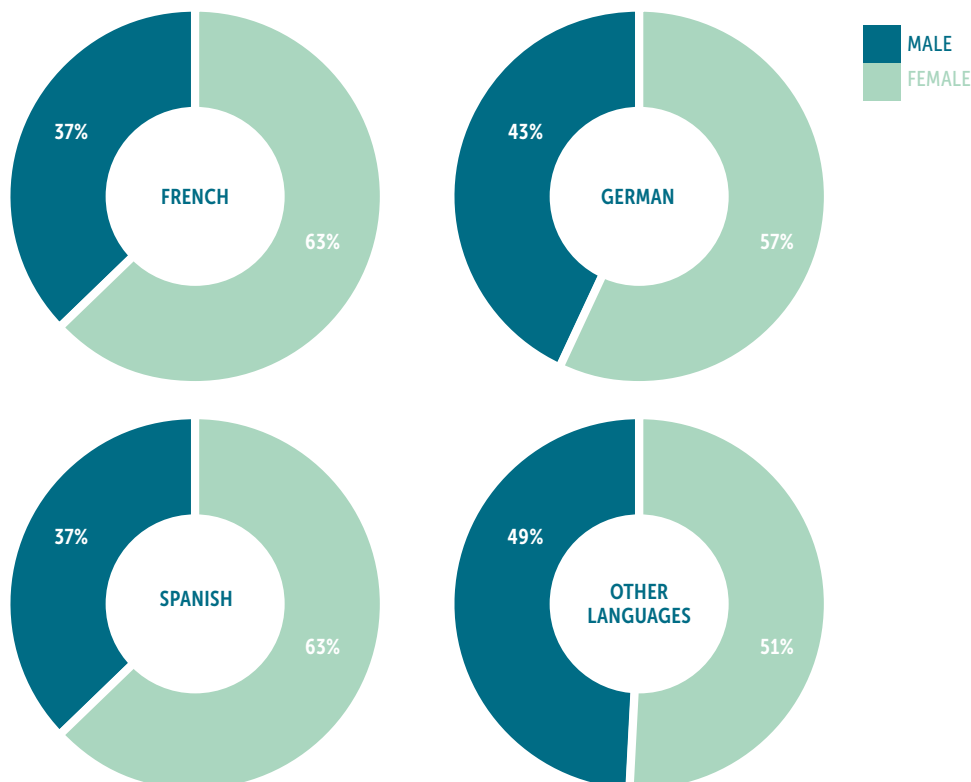
FIGURE 1: GCSE MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE ENTRIES FOR WALES, 2002-2016



GCSE entries for MFL by gender

Entries from female candidates heavily outweigh those from males in all foreign language subjects, accounting for 61 per cent of entries – exactly the same proportions as recorded in 2002. Entries for French and Spanish show the most bias towards female entries, while those for ‘Other Languages’ the least:

FIGURE 2: RATIO OF FEMALE TO MALE CANDIDATES, MODERN LANGUAGE SUBJECTS, 2016



Other languages

In the 'Other languages' category there are potentially a further 16 modern foreign languages, as well as Irish, Latin and Ancient Greek, which are currently offered at GCSE; however, the JCQ is not able to supply a breakdown of these for Wales because numbers are very small. It is likely that many of the entries in the 'Other Languages' category come from the further (FE), adult or voluntary sectors since the results of previous Language Trends surveys show that there is very little teaching of languages other than French, Spanish and German in Welsh schools.

Data from Statistics Wales

Unlike the English Department for Education, Statistics Wales does not publish data on the proportion of the age 15 cohort taking different subjects. However, they do publish raw numbers, as follows:

FIGURE 3:

Subject	Number of age 15 candidates, 2015	2016
French	4,793	4124
German	1,024	1,072
Spanish	1,745	1,252
Other Modern Foreign languages	394	443
All MFL	7,956	6,891
History	11,667	10,820
Additional Science	11,927	11,885
Mathematics	34,871	33,301

<https://stats.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Schools-and-Teachers/Examinations-and-Assessments/Key-Stage-4/gcseentriesandresultspupilsaged15only-by-subjectgroup>

These data show that the number of 15 year olds taking all MFL subjects combined (including 'Other Languages') in 2016 is less than two thirds of the number taking either History (64 per cent) or Additional Science (58 per cent) and only 21 per cent of the number taking Mathematics. These disparities have increased in the last year.

A level

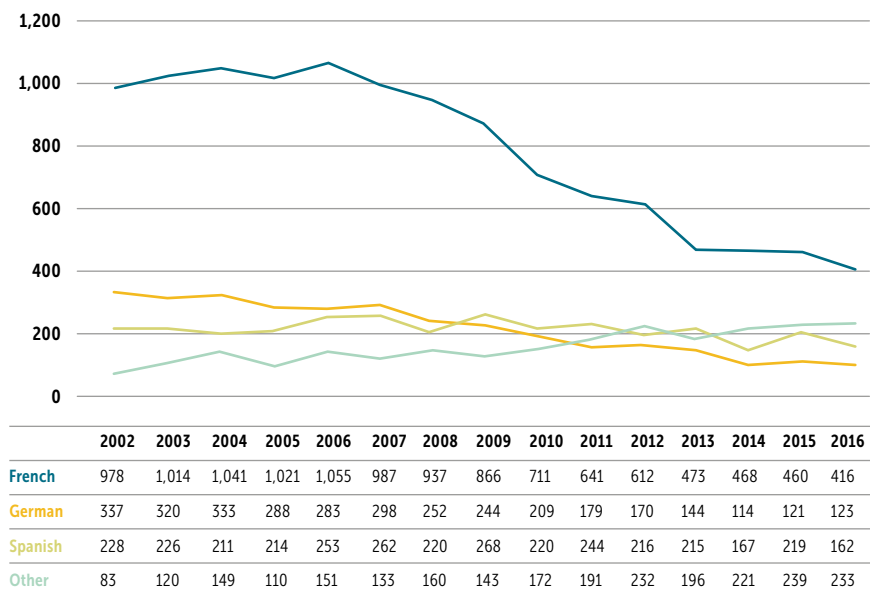
Entry numbers for MFL at A level are now so low that even small fluctuations in the number of candidates year by year appear as large percentage swings. In 2015, A level entries for MFL, apart from those for French, saw an increase with Spanish registering a 31 per cent 'bounce', partly compensating for very steep declines in both Spanish and German between 2013 and 2014. However, these increases have been lost in 2016, with an overall decline of 10 per cent in MFL entries. Spanish was the biggest loser in 2016, seeing a readjustment of -26 per cent after its spectacular increase the previous year. French entries declined by a further 10 per cent and other languages by three per cent. Only German continued to rise, from what is now a very low base, an additional two candidates accounting for an increase of two per cent.

As reported in previous Language Trends surveys, the trend in entries for MFL subjects at A level since 2006, has been one of steep declines. While entries for A level subjects generally have grown by seven per cent since 2001, entries for MFL have declined by 44 per cent. Entries for French now stand at well below half (40 per cent) of the 2001 level, while German has lost two thirds of its entries over the same period (-66 per cent). Despite increasing its numbers at GCSE over the same period, Spanish has lost 29 per cent of entries at A level since 2001. Only 'Other Languages' show an increase, with

While entries for A level subjects generally have grown by seven per cent since 2001, entries for MFL have declined by 44 per cent.

numbers rising from just 47 in 2001 to 233 last year (more than either German or Spanish). This most likely reflects the increased presence of pupils in Welsh schools with home languages other than English and Welsh.

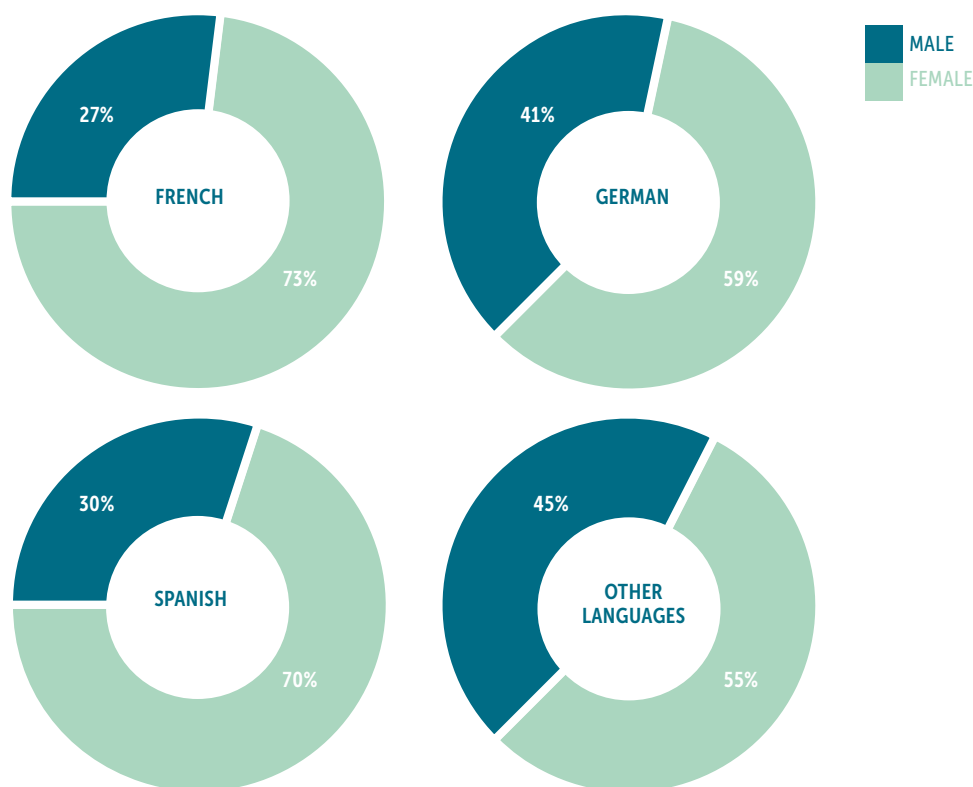
FIGURE 4: A LEVEL MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE ENTRIES FOR WALES, 2002-2016



A level entries in MFL by gender

The gender bias at A level is more marked than it is at GCSE, with 66 per cent of entries for MFL subjects coming from female candidates. This year French is the most gender-marked of the languages, with 73 per cent of candidates female, followed by Spanish with 70 per cent female candidates. German has a higher ratio of boys (41 per cent) and ‘Other languages’ show a more equal pattern of entry between the genders (45 per cent boys, 55 per cent girls).

FIGURE 5: RATIO OF FEMALE TO MALE CANDIDATES, MODERN LANGUAGE SUBJECTS, 2016



Other languages

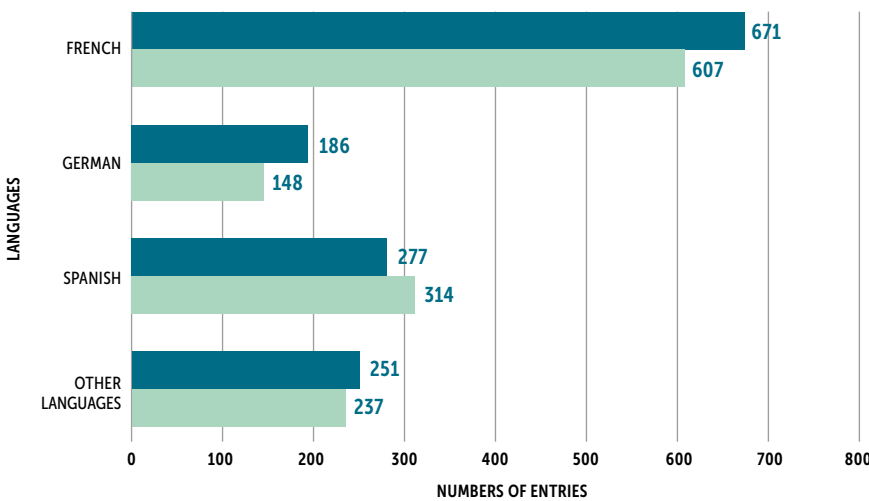
As noted in previous Language Trends surveys, the 'Other languages' do not generally come from languages taught as mainstream subjects in Welsh schools. They may come from the FE or adult education sector, or from pupils who have access to specific languages in their homes and communities and prepare for examinations outside the main school day. A total of 17 further languages in addition to the three main European ones are currently offered at A level, but the JCQ does not provide a breakdown of these entries for Wales alone, except for specifying that there were no entries for Irish.

As noted in previous Language Trends surveys, the 'Other languages' do not generally come from languages taught as mainstream subjects in Welsh schools.

Entries for AS

Although the number of entries for AS is a poor predictor of the number of entries at A2, it is, nevertheless, possible to gauge some trends from the figures. There were 10 per cent fewer entries for French AS in 2016 compared to 2015, and 20 per cent fewer German. However, Spanish increased by 13 per cent. With a slight decrease in the number taking 'Other Languages', this gives an overall decline of six per cent.

FIGURE 6: ENTRIES FOR AS MFL, 2015 AND 2016



It is interesting to note that for all modern foreign languages, but especially for Spanish and German, the ratio of girls to boys is even higher at AS than at A Level. This suggests that those boys who do take a language for AS are more likely to continue with it through to A2 than are the girls.

FIGURE 7:

2016	Proportion of male candidates at AS	Proportion of male candidates at A level
French	28%	27%
German	34%	41%
Spanish	24%	30%
Other languages	44%	45%
All MFL	30%	34%

Chapter 4

Survey findings



Take up for MFL in Key Stage 4

What proportion of pupils are currently studying a language in Key Stage 4?

The vast majority of schools have fewer than one in four pupils taking a foreign language to GCSE – 71 per cent in Year 11 and 73 per cent in Year 10. The evidence that there are more schools in the lowest band of rates of take up for Year 10 than for Year 11 indicates that the situation is worsening rather than improving. There is a similar picture to be drawn from the figures for schools with more than 25 per cent of pupils taking a modern foreign language: 29 per cent for Year 11 and 27 per cent for Year 10.

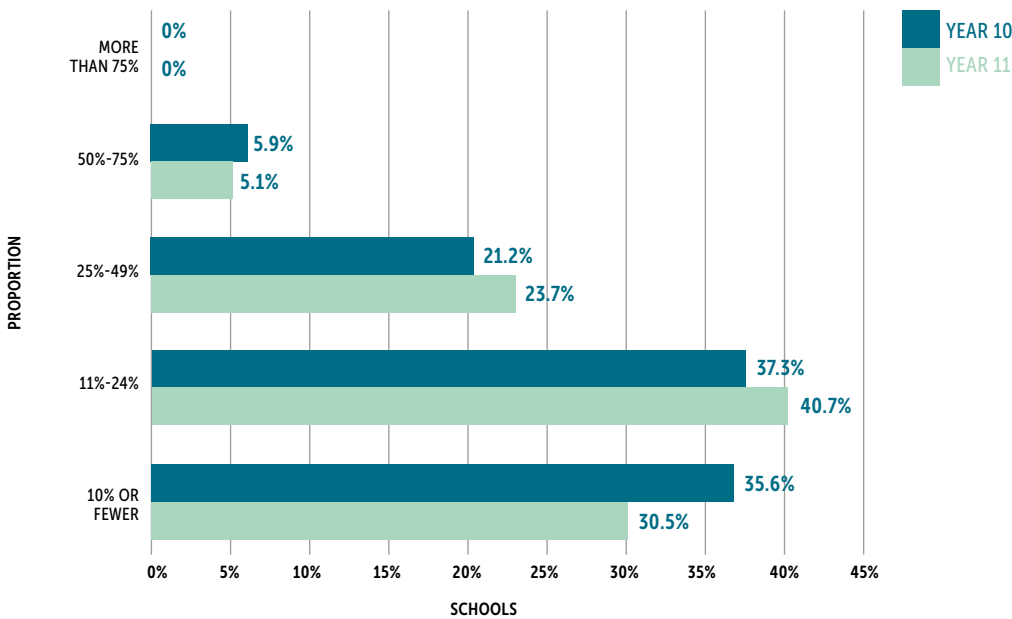
Around a third of schools have fewer than 10 per cent of their pupils taking a foreign language in Key Stage 4. For Year 11, there are 31 per cent of schools in this lowest category, but for Year 10 this proportion rises to 36 per cent, indicating that the situation has worsened by this measure too.

A tiny minority of schools (around one in twenty) have more than half their pupils taking a foreign language in Key Stage 4.

These findings indicate that the proportion of pupils taking MFL for GCSE is likely to drop further between 2017 and 2018.

The vast majority of schools have fewer than one in four pupils taking a foreign language to GCSE

FIGURE 8: SCHOOLS WITH VARIOUS PROPORTIONS OF PUPILS TAKING A LANGUAGE IN YEARS 10 AND 11



The qualitative evidence provided by respondents to our survey reinforces the situation revealed by the quantitative data. Only one respondent reports a healthy take up for MFL in Key Stage 4:

‘Over 40 per cent. This is consistent across the years.’

However, another, with small numbers, points to some improvement between Years 10 and 11:

‘There are 20 students in year 10 and 10 in year 11.’

All other respondents describe a situation in which there is a decline in the numbers of pupils at Key Stage 4 studying a foreign language, where there are no longer any pupils at all taking a modern foreign language to GCSE or where there are so few pupils opting for a language that the school cannot afford to run a foreign languages group to GCSE:

'We offer two languages at Key Stage 4 – French and Spanish. Fewer children now choose to follow two languages.'

'Pupils only have two options. Pupils did opt but the groups were not financially viable.'

'Currently no GCSE (Years 10 and 11) classes.'

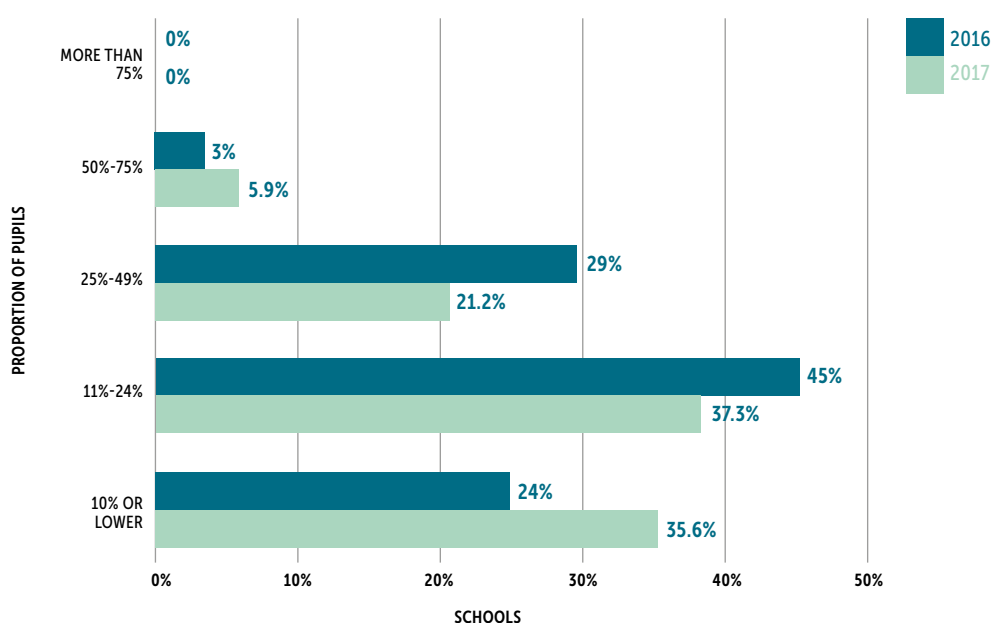
How does Key Stage 4 take up in 2017 compare with figures from 2016?

Between 2016 and 2017, the proportion of schools with fewer than 10 per cent of pupils taking MFL in Year 10 rose from below one quarter (24 per cent) to more than one third (36 per cent). Although the proportion of schools with more than 50 per cent of pupils taking a language has doubled, the number of schools where more than half of pupils take a language in Key Stage 4 is still very small indeed, around six per cent of the total. The proportions of schools in both the middle bands (25-49 per cent and 11-24 per cent) dropped, indicating a downward trend. The picture comparing bands of take up for Year 11 is almost identical, so not shown here. Between 2016 and 2017, there has been a drop of five percentage points in the proportion of schools where more than a quarter of pupils take a language in Year 10 (from 32 per cent to 27 per cent), and a drop of four percentage points with respect to Year 11 (from 30 per cent to 26 per cent).

These findings suggest that the proportion of pupils taking a language in 2017 will be lower than that in 2016, and continue to drop in 2018.

These findings suggest that the proportion of pupils taking a language in 2017 will be lower than that in 2016, and continue to drop in 2018.

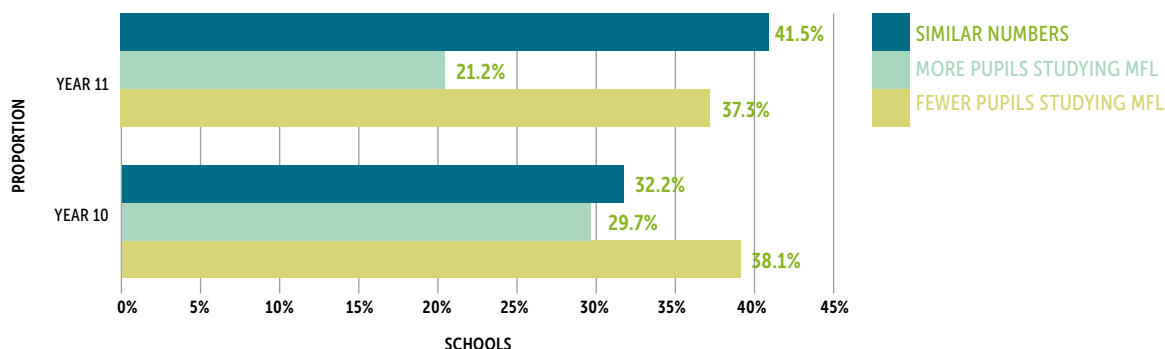
FIGURE 9: SCHOOLS WITH VARIOUS PROPORTIONS OF PUPILS TAKING MFL IN YEAR 10, 2016 AND 2017





These findings are confirmed by schools' responses to the question 'how do these proportions compare to last year?' In relation to both Year 10 and Year 11, more schools report declines than increases in numbers. However, one encouraging sign is that, comparing Year 10 with Year 11, a higher proportion of schools are reporting increases, 21 per cent in Year 11, in comparison to 30 per cent in Year 10.

FIGURE 10: SCHOOLS REPORTING CHANGES IN THE PROPORTIONS OF PUPILS TAKING MFL IN YEAR 10, AND 11



Our respondents provide qualitative evidence of some of the successful campaigns to increase the numbers of pupils taking a modern foreign language to GCSE as well as possible explanations for some of the steep declines in pupil numbers for foreign languages seen in many schools. Those commenting on increases in their schools state:

'We're pleased that there has been no decline in numbers, but a lot of hard work has gone into simply maintaining numbers: external speakers; trips; participation in events.'

'We offer a French GCSE course, a Spanish GCSE course and an NVQ Level 2 Spanish course for Business, which helps in attracting students to the department. Year 9 pupils also receive Mandarin lessons.'

Those who are witnessing a decline in pupil numbers for Modern Foreign Languages point to the predominance of compulsory subjects, particularly Welsh, which leaves little space or appetite for studying another language:

'The compulsory Welsh Bacc and compulsory Welsh have drastically reduced the options at GCSE and fewer pupils now take a language. We anticipate it will drop even further next year.'

'Compulsory Full Course Welsh has deterred certain pupils from doing another language.'

'It doesn't help that pupils only have 3 option choices now as there are so many compulsory subjects. It is very competitive.'

In at least one school, it is reported that senior managers explicitly equate Welsh with MFL, without highlighting the extra benefits of studying a foreign language:

Those who are witnessing a decline in pupil numbers for Modern Foreign Languages point to the predominance of compulsory subjects, particularly Welsh, which leaves little space or appetite for studying another language

'Our Senior Leadership Team (SLT) advises pupils to take a language at GCSE, but they tell them that Welsh is an MFL, so some pupils will stick with Welsh as they have been learning it since primary school.'

On the basis of this sample, there is no statistically-significant relationship between the level of uptake for MFL and the socio-economic circumstances of the school as indicated by Free School Meals (FSM) data. We analysed the profiles of schools reporting increases in take up for MFL at Key Stage 4, but there were no differences either in terms of regional consortium, medium of instruction or school governance structure. Schools reporting increases are spread across different consortia, language mediums and governance structures.

How many slots do schools provide for free option choices at GCSE?

The responses to this question show that the vast majority of schools (78 per cent) offer three free option choices:

FIGURE 11: NUMBER OF FREE GCSE OPTION CHOICES OFFERED BY SCHOOLS

More than 4	1.7%
4	7.8%
3	78.4%
2	6.9%
1	3.4%
None/Not applicable	1.7%

Comments from our respondents show a complex situation in which many schools have reduced the number of free GCSE option choices following the introduction of the Welsh Baccalaureate, for example:

'Previously there were four options blocks but one block now taken away as a result of introduction of Welsh Bacc, which is allocated the equivalent time of one option.'

'The Welsh Bacc took one away.'

'The Welsh Bacc is now compulsory. Numbers taking French have declined since it has been introduced.'

Many schools have reduced the number of free GCSE option choices following the introduction of the Welsh Baccalaureate.

However, Modern Foreign Languages face additional challenges by having to 'compete' with subjects such as triple science or PE, music and drama as the following comments show:

'French and Spanish are pitched against art, drama and music.'

'There is also a fourth option column but it is not a free choice. It is for triple science, additional English and maths.'

'Triple science was in one of the option boxes so most opted for that! Therefore, only having two left'

'This year, French is against history, Spanish against geography. Both of these are traditionally strong subjects with big cohorts at A level.'

A minority of respondents report that their school does not operate a system of options:

'They have a free choice. There are no option columns.'

'Pupils do not have to choose in columns but simply put down their top 3 choices and then wait to be placed in option groups.'

We analysed the responses to this question by the level of take-up in Year 10 and found that two of the six schools with more than 50 per cent take up offer four free GCSE option slots; however, four schools with four option slots have take-up of 10 per cent or less, indicating that the number of option slots alone is not a sufficient explanation for low take-up. In addition, without knowing how many subject choices pupils were given, it is hard to analyse a relationship between these two variables.

FIGURE 12: IMPACT OF NUMBER OF OPTION SLOTS ON TAKE-UP OF MFL

Q3 options (columns) Q5 options (rows)	10% or fewer	11%-24%	25%-49%	50%-75%	Grand Total
1	2	1	1		4
2	3	2	2	1	8
3	32	35	21	3	91
4	4	3		2	9
More than 4	1		1		2
None/Not applicable		2			2
Grand Total	42	43	25	6	116

Are any pupils prevented from studying a language in Key Stage 4?

Nearly two thirds of schools (62 per cent) make provision for all pupils who wish, to study a foreign language in Key Stage 4. However, more than one in five schools (21 per cent) organise option choices in ways that prevent some pupils from taking MFL in some way. These figures are very similar to those achieved in 2015, although those from the 2016 survey differ. This may be attributable to the nature of the sample in 2016.

From the qualitative evidence provided by respondents to this year's survey, it is clear that while the majority of schools do make provision for all pupils who wish to, to study a foreign language in Key Stage 4, at the same time many schools actively discourage pupils from taking a foreign language if they do not think that they are capable of achieving the GCSE, for example:

'There is not a specific attainment level for accepting pupils. We are not allowed to say no to anyone. Although we advise some that they would struggle to cope, they tend to ignore this and do the subject.'

'Less able pupils are not encouraged to study a language. SLT advise pupils about appropriate learning pathways.'

'SLT speak to every pupil in Year 9 about option choices. Some pupils are discouraged from taking a MFL if their literacy results are low.'

A minority of schools are able to offer an NVQ alternative to a GCSE to those pupils who enjoy languages but are not capable of achieving a good grade at GCSE, for example:

Nearly two thirds of schools (62 per cent) make provision for all pupils who wish to, to study a foreign language in Key Stage 4.

'The pupils who enjoy languages but would struggle to gain a French GCSE qualification are advised to follow a Spanish for Business vocational course.'

One respondent provided an example of the way in which the organisation of option blocks can limit opportunities for pupils to choose a language at Key Stage 4:

'French is only available as an option in one column. This means that, if the pupil wants to study another subject in that column, they cannot choose French.'

This situation may reinforce the decline in take-up: if schools are only expecting to run one GCSE class, then the subject will only appear in one option column, offering a very limited choice for pupils.

This situation may reinforce the decline in take-up: if schools are only expecting to run one GCSE class, then the subject will only appear in one option column, offering a very limited choice for pupils.

FIGURE 13: SCHOOL PRACTICES IN ACCESS TO MFL FOR ALL PUPILS, 2015 TO 2017

	2015	2016	2017
All pupils who want to can study a language	61%	69%	62%
Pupils who choose to follow certain pathways cannot study a language	13%	5%	11%
Pupils who are not deemed capable of achieving a GCSE are not able to study a language	10%	12%	10%
Other	17%	14%	17%

Schools with lower levels of FSM are more likely to report that 'all pupils who want to can study a language' and schools with higher levels of FSM (i.e. working in more economically-disadvantaged circumstances) are more likely to report practices which exclude some pupils from MFL in Key Stage 4. However, this relationship is not statistically significant.

Key points

- Take up of MFL in Key Stage 4 continues to fall, in both Years 10 and Year 11. The proportion of schools with more than 25 per cent of pupils taking a language in Key Stage 4 has declined, while the proportion with less than 25 per cent of pupils has increased.
- More than a third of schools now have fewer than 10 per cent of Year 10 pupils taking the subject.
- The main reasons given for declining numbers are the predominance of compulsory subjects and the introduction of the Welsh Baccalaureate which has reduced the number of free option slots.
- Where schools have increased or at least maintained numbers, this has been due to strenuous efforts to promote the subject and, in at least one case, by introducing alternative qualifications.

MFL post-16

Only 70 per cent of responding schools cater for post-16 pupils and of these four out of five (81 per cent) offer post-16 language courses. This means that just 66 schools, out of our sample of 116 which answered this question, provide post-16 teaching in languages. This is equivalent to 57 per cent. The base for the responses which follow to the questions on post-16 language provision is therefore smaller than one hundred (66 in each case).

Schools which do not offer language courses post-16 say that this is either because of very low take up or because of consortium arrangements with other schools for post-16 courses:

'Lack of pupils choosing languages.'

'No take up - or one or two only.'

'Within the consortium, A level French is taught elsewhere'

'Pupils have to travel to other schools if they want to study languages.'

'Minimal. After school, via video link. Pupils dropped out.'

Schools which do not offer language courses post-16 say that is either because of very low take up or because of consortium arrangements with other schools for post-16 courses

Take up for MFL post-16

Two thirds of schools (65 per cent) say that numbers for MFL post-16 are in decline, while 15 per cent have increased numbers. Compared to previous years, larger numbers say they have experienced declines (65 per cent compared to 58 per cent in 2016, but 64 per cent in 2015); however more schools also say they have increased numbers (15 per cent compared to six per cent in 2016 and seven per cent in 2015), with fewer schools reporting stable numbers. However, these year-on-year percentage comparisons must be interpreted with caution because of the small number of schools involved.¹⁷

Those respondents whose schools are experiencing an increase in the numbers of pupils taking MFL at AS/A levels comment as follows:

'French & Spanish - we have managed to go from two to four candidates for French and two to six candidates for Spanish.'

'French- largest group ever of 11 AS pupils.'

'Spanish has increased dramatically.'

'There has been a steady increase in the number of pupils studying French at AS level, this year we have seven pupils - the highest number we have had in a number of years.'

The majority of respondents report declines in pupil numbers for MFL post-16, to the extent that a number of schools are ceasing to offer MFL at this level. Among the reasons given for the demise of MFL at post-16 are competition from other subjects, financial constraints and low levels of take up:

'We will not be offering MFL to Sixth Form pupils next year.'

'There has been a large surge towards STEM [science, technology, engineering and maths] subjects amongst pupils, with fewer following the linguistic/arts path.'

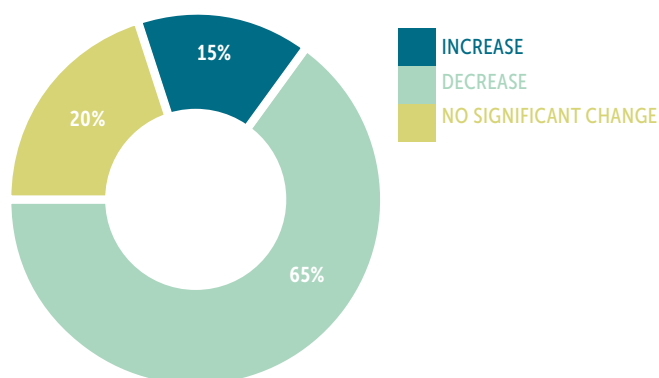
'Both French and German are not running this year. French has not run for approximately three years. This is the first year that German has not run at AS/A2.'

'Only French is offered now because of financial constraints. The Trisgol system of collaboration between schools has not worked. Instead, it has taken two years for the number of sixth formers choosing French to increase.'

'Too many studying science and mathematics. A reduction in both languages.'

¹⁷Language Trends Wales 2015/16, p. 55.

FIGURE 14: SCHOOLS EXPERIENCING CHANGES IN POST-16 TAKE UP FOR MFL OVER THE LAST 3 YEARS



How many pupils are taking post-16 MFL courses in each school?

The responses to this question show that 44 per cent of schools have fewer than five pupils for AS courses, and as many as 61 per cent of schools have similarly small numbers for A2. Group sizes are often even smaller, since many schools are teaching more than one foreign language. In at least one case, the numbers given in the quantitative response cover all three European languages offered by the school:

'Those numbers are over three language (French, German and Spanish) for AS which means that we are running some very small classes (for example, two for French AS).'

Only nine schools in our sample have ten or more pupils opting to take AS and this number drops to just two schools in the case of A2. One respondent in our sample comments that their school requires twelve pupils to register for a course for it to be regarded as financially viable:

'We have always sustained pleasing numbers at AS & A2. Unfortunately, our numbers below 12 pupils do not allow us to run the course due to lack of funding. Other schools do, however, run courses on lower numbers than we have had.'

It is also clear, however, that headteachers are able to make exceptions regarding 'financial viability' in order to allow important subjects to continue to be taught at AS/A level. One respondent spells out exactly what their school's post-16 pupil numbers for MFL are:

'This year: AS: German, nobody studying; French two. At A Level German three pupils/French three pupils.'

Other schools work together in clusters or partnerships to enable post-16 language courses to run, for example:

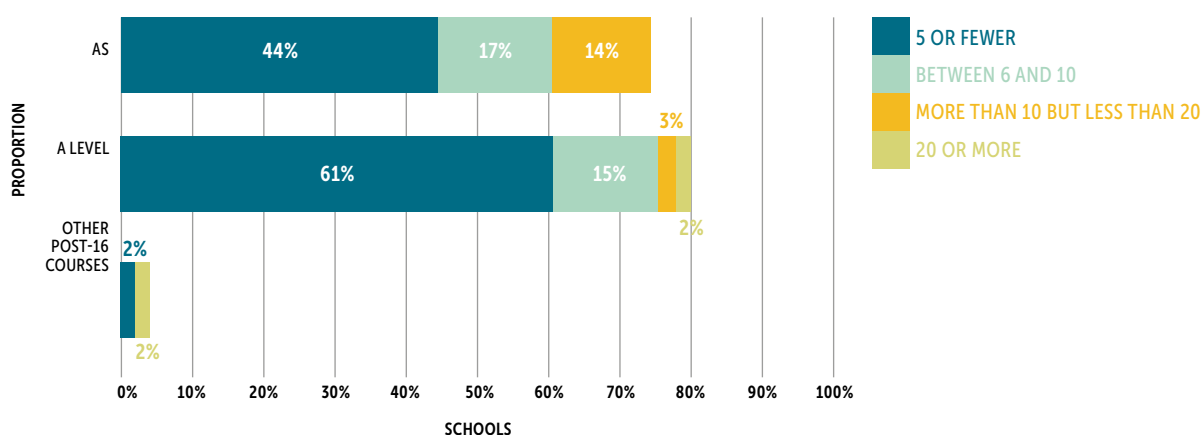
'We are in a cluster of four schools - whoever has the greatest number of pupils wins the course.'

Just one school has more than 20 pupils for A2, although they have fewer for AS. The number of schools reporting very small numbers for MFL post-16 has increased since last year's survey, in which 41 per cent reported 5 or fewer students for AS and 58 per cent did so for A2.¹⁸ The proportions of schools with numbers of between six and ten students has declined since last year when the figures were 29 per cent for AS and 20 per cent for A2.

Only nine schools in our sample have ten or more pupils opting to take AS and this number drops to just two schools in the case of A2

¹⁸Language Trends 2015/16, p. 54.

FIGURE 15: TAKE UP FOR MFL POST-16



Reasons for the declines/increases in numbers

Respondents' comments provide useful qualitative evidence regarding some of the reasons why teachers believe their pupils do not choose to study MFL at AS or A level. Some respondents state that the difficulty of the examination is having an adverse effect on pupils choosing to study a language post-16:

'The difficulty of the AS exam puts off good pupils as they can't afford to have a C at AS on their application. The exams are killing us. I doubt I will have very many AS next year.'

'Difficulty. They prefer to choose the easier subjects so they can get a higher grade to get to university.'

'The perception that languages are difficult + GCSE not preparing for the demands of the AS course (although this will change with the new GCSE) + the AS course too academic and not progressive enough.'

Others blame competition with other subjects which are marketed to pupils and their parents more successfully, for example:

'Too many of them are studying science and mathematics.'

'Our numbers have gone down dramatically, this will continue due to the limit on options.'

'They believe other subjects will help them get better jobs.'

Another reason given for declining numbers for post-16 languages is the fact that fewer pupils are choosing to study a language to GCSE, which in turn results in a decline at AS/A2 level and courses which are financially non-viable, for example:

'Insufficient number of pupils to make the course viable.'

'Falling numbers at GCSE and pupils going down the science route.'

One last reason cited by a number of respondents for declining numbers for MFL at post-16 is the lack of leadership at SLT and the lack of a belief in the value of foreign languages. Some examples of these comments are as follows:

Another reason given for declining numbers for post-16 languages is the fact that fewer pupils are choosing to study a language to GCSE

'Schools (senior management teams) do not see the long-term academic value of MFL.'

'Too high a bar set by SLT and governors; requirements are 10 or more pupils which is the same as GCSE.'

The small number of schools which have seen increases in the numbers of students choosing to study a foreign language at AS/A level offer two main reasons for their success. The first relates to the quality and consistency of teaching, for example:

'Permanent and consistent teachers within the department at Key Stage 4.'

'Enthusiasm of the MFL teaching staff and excellent GCSE grades.'

And the second relates to the MFL department's ability to market their subject successfully and to offer a range of activities which attracts the students:

'Staff persuasion and advertising of the subject. Visitors organised to speak to pupils about language learning past GCSE.'

'Continuity with teacher. Good numbers at Key Stage 4. Good relationship with GCSE group. Lots of extra activities done with GCSE group to encourage participation.'

Key points

- The situation for MFL post 16 looks increasingly fragile, particularly in a context of financial constraints where schools cannot afford to run courses for small numbers.
- Some 44 per cent of schools have fewer than five students for AS courses, and as many as 61 per cent of schools have similarly small numbers for A2. Only nine schools in our sample have more than ten pupils opting to take AS in MFL and this number drops to just two schools in the case of A2.
- The difficulty of the AS and A2 examinations, competition from other subjects, and a smaller pool of GCSE pupils to draw on are given as reasons for declining numbers for MFL post-16. These are being exacerbated further by current financial pressures on schools.
- Where schools have managed to increase numbers for MFL post-16, this is attributed to good teaching and continuity from the outset, as well as efforts to raise awareness of the value of language skills within the school.

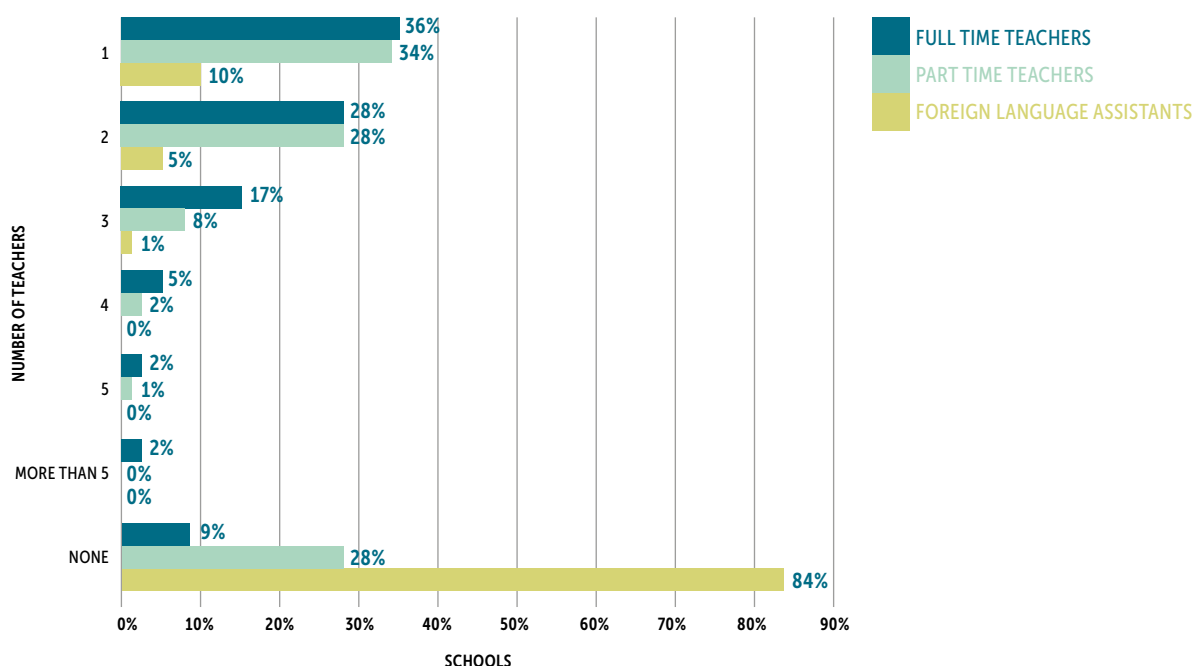
Teaching staff

Make up of MFL departments

Nearly two thirds of MFL departments (64 per cent) have just one or two full time teachers and more than a third (36 per cent) have just one full time teacher. There is a heavy dependence on part-time MFL teachers, with 72 per cent of schools employing at least one. Just 16 per cent of schools employ foreign language assistants, although several schools employ more than one.

There is a heavy dependence on part-time MFL teachers, with 72 per cent of schools employing at least one

FIGURE 16: NUMBERS OF TEACHING STAFF FOR MFL



Nationals of other European Union countries in the MFL teaching force

As might be expected, all of the schools employing foreign language assistants say these are non-British EU nationals from other countries. However, 23 per cent of schools employ EU nationals as full time teachers and 16 per cent rely on them as part-time teaching staff.

FIGURE 17: SCHOOLS EMPLOYING NON-BRITISH EU NATIONALS AS LANGUAGE TEACHERS

As full time teachers	23%
As part-time teachers	16%
As foreign language assistants	16%

As might be expected, all of the schools employing foreign language assistants say these are non-British EU nationals from other countries.

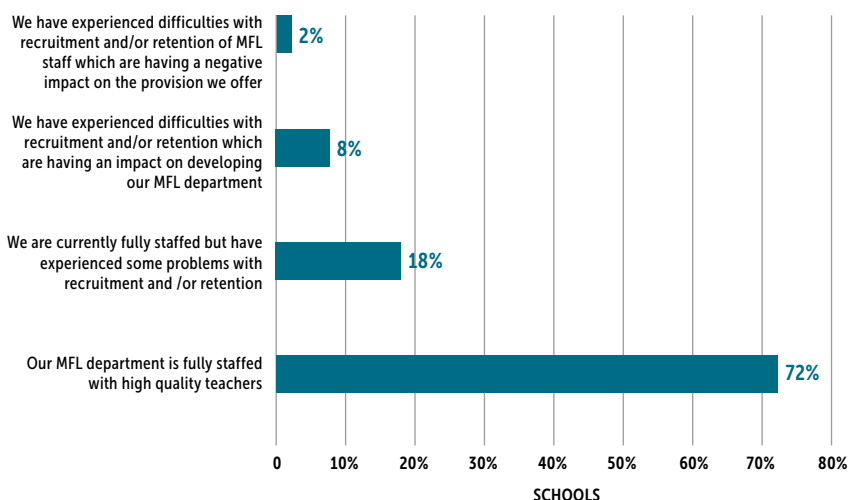
Overall, one third of respondents (34 per cent) employ non-British EU nationals either as full or part-time language teachers, or both. The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Languages has estimated that 35 per cent of language teachers across the UK are EU nationals of other member states; this figure confirms that the estimation is almost exactly correct in the case of Wales.¹⁹

How easy is it for schools to recruit and retain high quality teachers of MFL?

Nearly three quarters of schools (72 per cent) say that they are fully staffed with high quality MFL teachers. (Given recent shrinkage of the subject, this should not be surprising. This is a higher proportion than in England, where only 57 per cent say this, however in England many schools are expecting to expand provision). However, this means that 28 per cent have had some difficulties, and in a small number of schools, teacher supply and/or retention problems are having a negative impact on provision or development of the subject.

¹⁹All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Languages, *Brexit and Languages: a checklist for government negotiators and officials*, 2016, available online at: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/education/schools/support-for-languages/thought-leadership/appg/news/brexit-languages> (accessed 14/5/2017).

FIGURE 18: TEACHER SUPPLY AND RETENTION IN MFL



Respondents who provide additional information about difficulties in recruiting or retaining teachers of MFL, comment as follows:

'When advertising for a MFL post, we tend to have a very small field of candidates that fit our criteria (for example, candidates who can only offer Spanish to Key Stage 3 when we are looking for someone to teach up to Key Stage 5)'

'We have experienced difficulties with the recruitment of teachers to provide maternity leave during the last school year.'

'We have lost two previous heads of MFL and did find it hard to fill the post - it took longer than anticipated.'

Additionally, there are a number of respondents who describe attrition to the MFL department caused by schools opting not to replace staff who leave, for example:

'We have not looked to recruit staff for about eight years - due to cuts in funding staff who have left have not been replaced.'

'None of the above [tick boxes] actually apply, we are unable currently to recruit. There is now additional pressure to recruit Welsh teachers.'

A small number of respondents also comment on a situation in which the single member of the MFL department is supported by a non-specialist teaching colleague in order to cover the requirements of the timetable for MFL, for example:

'We have one French teacher. Because of the timetable there is sometimes one lesson too many, which is difficult to staff and means we need to use a teacher who does not specialise in the subject.'

'The other teacher in my department teaches eight hours a fortnight and is a geography teacher with A level French.'

'There is only one member of the MFL department, two other teachers pick up lessons that one simply cannot fit into the timetable.'

We have lost two previous heads of MFL and did find it hard to fill the post - it took longer than anticipated.

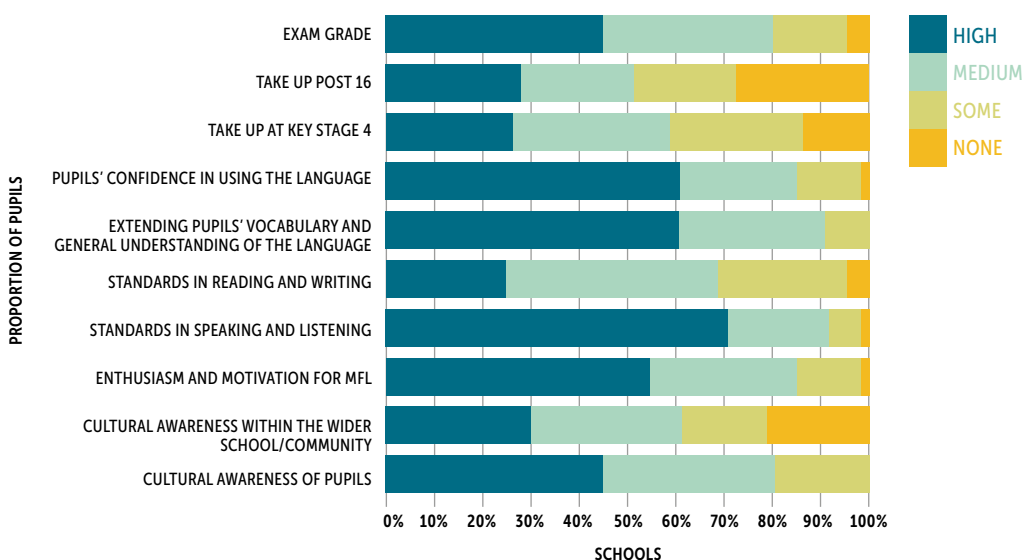
Foreign Language Assistants

More than half of schools (57 per cent) say they have had experience of hosting a foreign language assistant. These schools were asked to rate the impact foreign language assistants have on various aspects of pupils' progress in MFL and on their development more broadly.

The quantitative responses show that schools generally rate the impact of FLAs very highly across the whole range of indicators. More than nine out of ten schools rated their impact as either 'high' (the majority) or 'medium' for improving pupils' cultural awareness, standards in speaking and listening and extending their vocabulary and general understanding of the language. FLAs' impact in terms of pupil confidence was rated as 'high' by nearly two thirds of schools and their impact on exam grades was noted as at least 'medium' by four out of five schools. In every area, more than half of schools rated their impact as at least 'medium'. The areas where they were seen to have least impact were on take up, both at Key Stage 4 and Post-16.

More than half of schools (57 per cent) say they have had experience of hosting a foreign language assistant.

FIGURE 19: IMPACT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE ASSISTANTS



Of the 64 schools which have had recent experience of hosting a foreign language assistant, over two thirds no longer do so. One respondent comments with some regret:

'We have noticed the impact foreign language assistants had now that we do no longer have them and teachers are having to offer extra sessions to fill the void.'

Only 20 schools in our sample say that they are currently hosting one or more foreign language assistants. Schools which do not currently employ a foreign language assistant were asked to say why they did not. The principal reason, given by 82 per cent of respondents, for no longer hosting an FLA is one of funding:

'Not available through ECTARC [European Centre for Training and Regional Cooperation] this year and the school has no funding to pay for one through the British Council.'

'Lack of money, Can't afford to pay for one with budget cuts.'

'Our school had funding last year through Schools Challenge and we bid for money to employ a foreign language assistant. Without this funding, we are unable to afford an FLA, so we don't have one this year.'

A small number of respondents in remote or isolated areas highlighted difficulties in their geographic location as the reason why they do not employ a foreign language assistant:

'No availability from Bangor University. Students must travel over 40 minutes by train to attend the school.'

'Small school in rural North Wales with one MFL teacher without A Level and therefore it would not be a financially sensible choice.'

'We usually share the hours with another school, and this year, we had nobody to share with.'

Others point to a lack of interest or uptake by pupils:

'No Key Stage 4 MFL and only Spanish at Key Stage 3.'

'Students didn't feel having a foreign language assistant enhanced their learning of the language.'

A small number of respondents in remote or isolated areas highlighted difficulties in their geographic location as the reason why they do not employ a foreign language assistant

Key points

- Nearly two thirds of MFL departments (64 per cent) have just one or two full time teachers and more than a third (36 per cent) have just one full time teacher.
- There is a heavy dependence on part-time MFL teachers, and on nationals of other EU countries
- Some 34 per cent of schools employ EU nationals of other member states either as full time or part time teachers of MFL, or both.
- Recent shrinkage in MFL provision has disguised an underlying shortage of teachers, with evidence that some schools are relying on teachers who are not qualified in the subject to bridge gaps.

Support and Continuing Professional Development

A large majority of schools, 72 per cent, say they have received support from their Regional Consortium/Centre of Excellence established as part of the Welsh Government's Global Futures plan. Seventeen per cent say they have not, and 11 per cent are not sure.

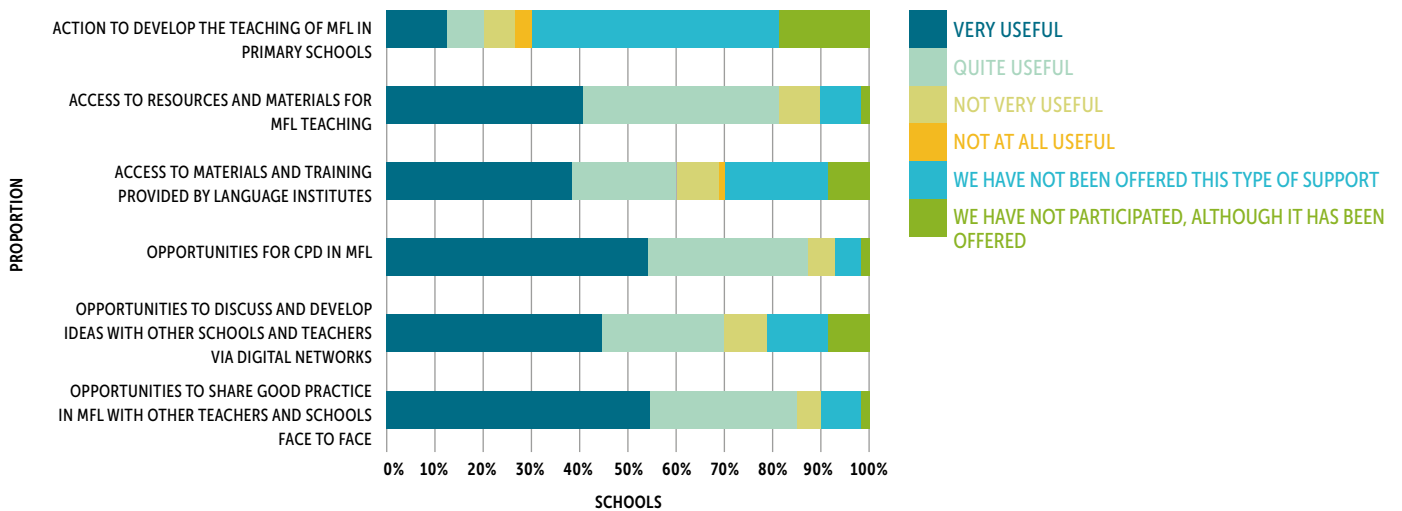
Schools which say they have received support, and those that are not sure, were asked what types of support they have received and whether this has been useful. The rich data provided by the responses to this question shows that:

- The types of support most appreciated by teachers are 'opportunities for CPD in MFL' and 'sharing practice with others face to face'. More than half of respondents say these have been 'very useful' and around another third say that these opportunities have been 'quite useful'.
- 'Access to resources' and 'opportunities for contacts via digital networks' are also regarded as valuable, but less so.



- The area which has been least exploited, and least appreciated, is support for the development of MFL in primary schools. More than half of schools have not been offered this support, and of those that have, a large proportion have not participated. Some of those who have participated (four schools) judge it to be 'not at all useful'. This is the only type of support receiving a wholly negative response. This indicates that helping primary schools to develop MFL teaching is not high on the agendas of secondary school language departments.

FIGURE 20: RATING OF SUPPORT FROM REGIONAL CONSORTIA



There is praise for the work of the regional consortia in the form of positive comments from respondents with one regional consortium in particular receiving glowing feedback from a number of teachers in the area they cover. A sample of these comments follows and have been anonymised for the purposes of this report:

- 'Our local network has been fantastic so far.'*
- 'The work of the [regional consortium]²⁰ has been excellent in supporting us as we deliver new GCSE and A Level courses.'*
- 'The support I have received from the [centre of excellence] has been invaluable, especially with regards to the new GCSE and A level specifications.'*

There is some qualitative evidence from a small number of respondents that the impact of the regional consortia may be being constrained by school regimens, for example:

- 'The [regional consortium] supports us and provides funding, etc. However, the school is very strict on when we can be released or awarded cover for our lessons. e.g. The Heads of Department for French and Spanish can't both attend meetings/ CPD at the same time.'*
- 'Our SLT is currently unable to give permission for CPD as they feel that supply teachers lead to disruptive behaviour amongst students. Maybe CPD should be made a statutory requirement.'*

There is some qualitative evidence from a small number of respondents that the impact of the regional consortia may be being constrained by school regimens

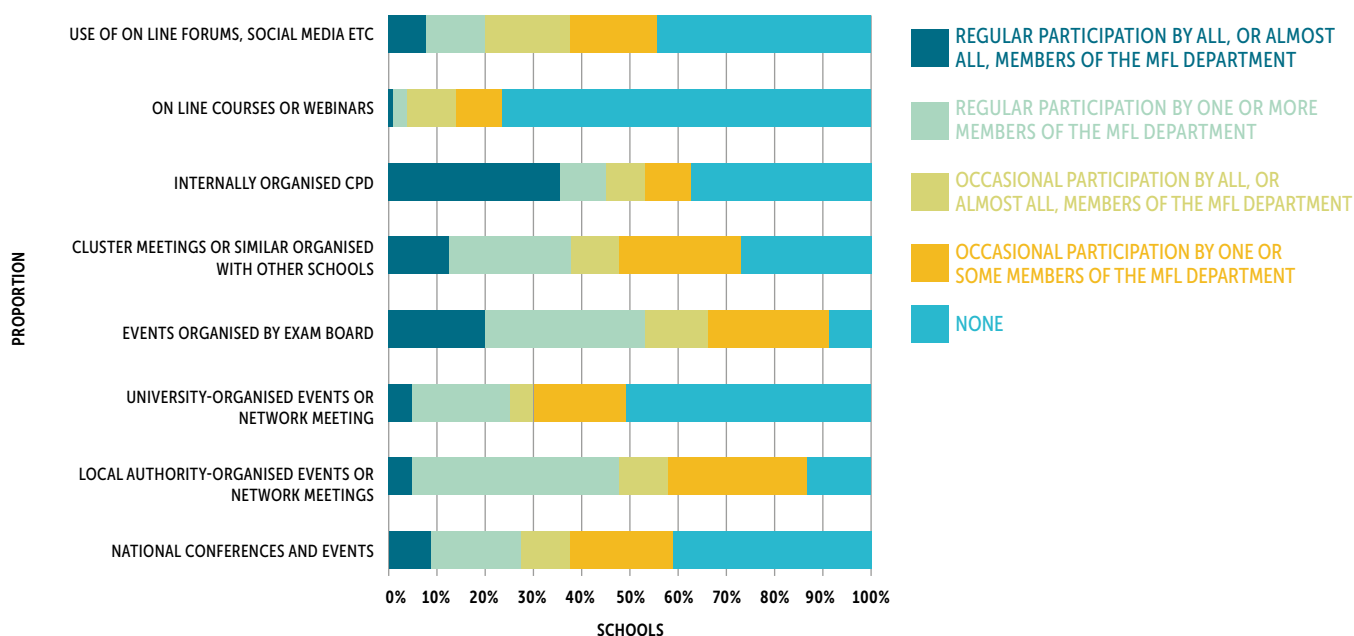
²⁰References to specific regional consortia/centres of excellence and individuals have been withheld to protect anonymity.

To what extent do MFL teachers take part in different forms of CPD?

The chart below shows that 36 per cent of schools regularly arrange and deliver CPD for MFL teachers within school. This contrasts with last year's finding that only 28 per cent of schools had organised subject specific CPD for their MFL staff in the past year.²¹ More than half of schools (54 per cent) regularly send at least one MFL teacher to attend training provided by the exam boards and around half regularly attend network meetings with other schools organised by the local authorities, local centres of excellence or regional consortia. There is very little take up of webinars, on-line training or peer training using social media.

There is very little take up of webinars, on-line training or peer training using social media.

FIGURE 21: PARTICIPATION IN DIFFERENT FORMS OF CPD



Comparing these results with responses to a similar question in the Language Trends England survey (2016):

- Language teachers in England much more commonly use online forums and social media for languages (only 21 per cent have no involvement, compared to 46 per cent in Wales), and are much more likely to take part in online courses or webinars (only 16 per cent do not, compared to 86 per cent in Wales).
- A far higher proportion of MFL departments in Wales are not involved in internally-organised CPD for subject specific languages (36 per cent compared to just 14 per cent in England). This could be linked to the fact that more MFL departments in Wales have only one full-time teacher or are reliant on part-time staff.
- However, MFL teachers in Wales are much more likely to take part in CPD activity organised by exam boards with more than half of schools participating regularly, compared to only 29 per cent in England.

²¹In the 2016 survey, the question was worded more clearly to refer to CPD for languages, so it is possible that in responding to this question in the 2017 survey, respondents are referring whole-school CPD which is not focused on languages. However, in the most recent English Language Trends survey which asked the same question, 46 per cent regularly took part in internal CPD for languages involving all or most members of the department: Tinsley and Board, *Language Trends Wales 2015/16*, p. 50; *Language Trends 2016/17, Language Teaching in Primary and Secondary Schools in England*, p. 85.

- They are also more likely to take part in local authority organised events and network meetings – in England, only 24 per cent of schools do so regularly, while in Wales this figure is 50 per cent.

Key points

- As many as 72 per cent of responding schools report having received support from their regional consortium/centre of excellence established as part of the Welsh Government’s ‘Global Futures’ plan. Many comment very favourably on the support they have received, although in some schools, internal constraints have limited their impact.
- Opportunities for CPD in MFL and to share practice with others face to face are the types of support most appreciated by teachers.
- Support for the development of MFL in primary schools is the area which has been least exploited, and is less appreciated than other types of support where schools have taken up the offer.

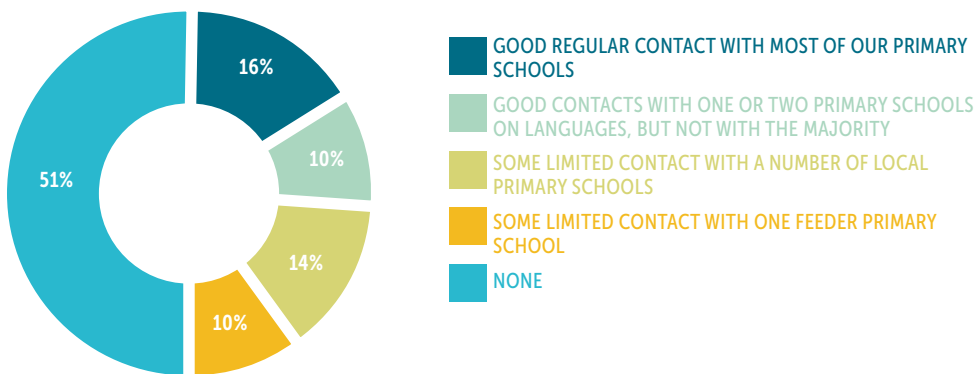
Nearly half (49 per cent) of secondary schools have some contact, however limited, with local primary schools on foreign language matters

Contacts with primary schools

To what extent do secondary schools have contacts with local primary schools over the learning of new languages?

Nearly half (49 per cent) of secondary schools have some contact, however limited, with local primary schools on foreign language matters. This has not changed appreciably since 2016.

FIGURE 22: LEVEL OF CONTACT SCHOOLS HAVE WITH LOCAL PRIMARIES ON LANGUAGE ISSUES



The qualitative evidence from respondents to our survey provides a mixed picture with a small number of examples of close contact between secondary schools and their primary feeder schools, for example:

‘We are currently heavily involved with the consortium’s Key Stage 2 project, and have language specialists (and an FLA, thanks to consortium funding) going into primary schools to deliver content.’

'We have a multilingual literacy transition scheme where Year 6 pupils come for regular transition sessions.'

'I have taught French lessons in all six of our cluster primary schools over the last two school years as I have been given time to do so by our senior management team.'

There are also examples of previous practice in offering MFL support to primary feeders where schools are no longer able to do so because of lack of funding:

'We used to be actively involved with the delivery of MFL in our local primary schools but budget and timetable constraints have prevented us from continuing with the scheme for a few years now.'

'Sporadic transition events-nothing more. Funding was cut for this-we used to go to the primaries to teach.'

'We participated fully in the CILT Cymru programme and went out to teach in feeder primaries - but funding has stopped and we are now no longer in regular contact.'

'We used to be part of a pilot scheme where MFL were taught in all our cluster schools. This meant developing valuable links with those schools and the pupils. Primary school pupils have very little experience of learning MFL these days.'

Sporadic transition events-nothing more. Funding was cut for this-we used to go to the primaries to teach

One or two respondents comment that they have contacted their local primary schools but met with little response, for example:

'We offer the primary schools taster lessons, but not every primary school in the catchment area is willing to allow us to disrupt their timetable.'

'We have contacted all primary schools, but many of them feel that they don't have the curriculum time to spend learning an MFL.'

Finally, a minority of respondents comment on the regular contact between secondary and primary schools for English and Welsh but say that MFL is not included in these meetings:

'There is more emphasis on Welsh language with feeder primary schools.'

'Those issues we discuss are only regarding Welsh and English.'

'MFL has no contact with feeder primaries, However, this is not the situation with Welsh who have contact and cluster meetings.'

'A cluster meeting once a term between the secondary school and the primary schools that feed it – the purpose of this is to focus on levels in Welsh Second Language – there is no discussion on MFL.'

Key points

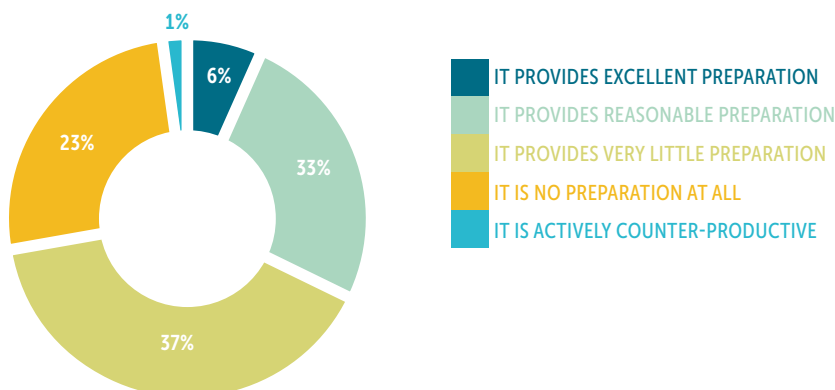
- There are examples of good practice in supporting primary schools to lay a good foundation for MFL. These could be replicated more widely throughout the regional consortia network.
- Some of the positive impact gained through former projects funded by the Welsh Government has been lost in recent years as funding has been withdrawn.
- Opportunities to integrate discussion about MFL into transition arrangements for Welsh and English are being overlooked.

MFL and the teaching of Welsh

To what extent do respondents see that the teaching of Welsh and English in primary schools prepare pupils for success in MFL?

The majority of MFL teachers do not see the teaching of Welsh and English in primary schools as a good foundation for learning a foreign language. While six per cent think it provides 'excellent' preparation, and one third believe it is 'reasonable' preparation, the remainder, over 60 per cent, believe it provides no or little preparation.

FIGURE 23: THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE TEACHING OF WELSH AND ENGLISH IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IS SEEN AS A GOOD PREPARATION FOR MFL



The majority of teachers responding to the survey question about the extent to which the teaching of English and Welsh at primary school is good preparation for MFL say that pupils coming into Year 7 have a poor grammatical knowledge in any language and that they are unable to make links between the vocabulary and structure of languages to support the acquisition of a new foreign language. A sample of the comments teachers make, identified by the medium of instruction, follows:

'Pupils are still not very good at grammar and do need MFL teachers to help them with making links.' (English Medium - EM)

'Pupil language skills have deteriorated, their understanding of the grammar of Welsh and English is weak, and lack of punctuation is a concern.' (Welsh Medium - WM)

'The teaching of Welsh / English in primaries does not seem to include any idea of making links across languages / developing pupils' awareness of language.' (EM)

'Pupils coming up in Year 7 have very poor understanding of language concepts and struggle with basic sentence structure. They generally have no sense that languages are related and that awareness of one language can help in recognising vocabulary / acquiring knowledge of / developing skills in other languages.' (EM)

'No link is made with the Welsh as a second language team.'(EM)

Pupils coming into Year 7 have a poor grammatical knowledge in any language and they are unable to make links between the vocabulary and structure of languages to support the acquisition of a foreign language

A small amount of qualitative evidence suggests that teachers from Welsh medium schools are more likely to comment positively on the benefits of bilingualism than are their peers in English medium schools. The following two comments are from respondents working in Welsh medium schools:

'It means that pupils are already used to thinking in two languages, and some elements of Welsh language grammar helps them with learning MFL.'

'Being bilingual gives special advantages to pupils to broaden their knowledge of how languages work. They are more open to learning new languages and can use their experience in both languages.'

An analysis of the responses to this question by the school's medium of instruction provides further evidence for this. Welsh medium schools are statistically significantly more likely to see the preparation as 'excellent' or 'reasonable' than are English medium schools or Bilingual schools. However, it is worth noting that the numbers of Welsh medium schools are low.

FIGURE 24:

	Bilingual	English medium	Welsh	Grand Total
It is actively counter-productive		1		1
It is no preparation at all	5	21	1	27
It provides excellent preparation	2	3	2	7
It provides reasonable preparation	8	23	7	38
It provides very little preparation	9	32	2	43
Grand Total	25	79	12	116

Welsh medium schools are statistically significantly more likely to see the preparation as 'excellent' or 'reasonable' than are English medium schools or Bilingual schools

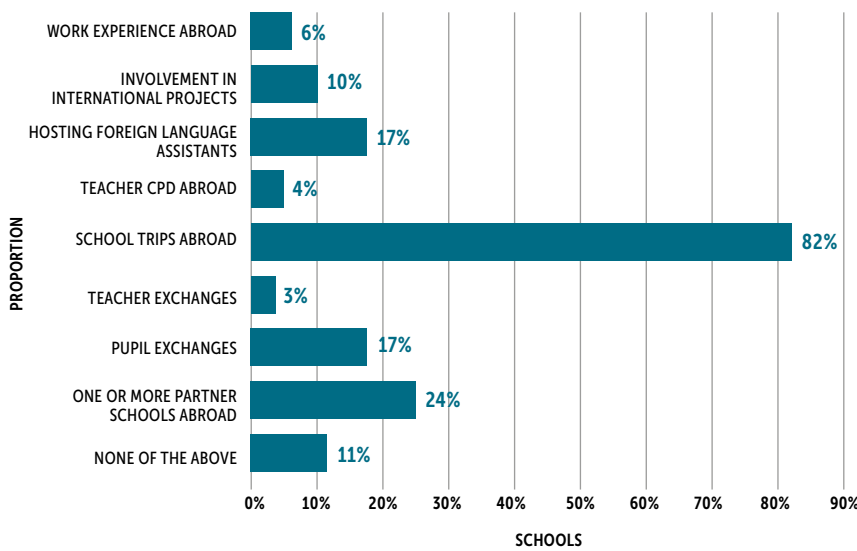
Key point

- The majority of language teachers do not see the teaching of Welsh and English in primary schools as a good foundation for learning a foreign language. While six per cent think it provides 'excellent' preparation, and one third believe it is 'reasonable' preparation, the remainder, over 60 per cent, believe it provides no or little preparation.
- There is evidence that in some Welsh-medium schools there is a high level of sensitisation to the value of bilingualism for the learning of third languages.

International engagement

The quantitative responses to this question show a high level of international engagement by schools, particularly in the organisation of trips abroad. More than four out of five schools (82 per cent) report that they organise foreign trips for pupils (although we do not know which department organises them, how many pupils are involved and whether they have a foreign language element).

FIGURE 25: TYPES OF INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT



The qualitative evidence provides some detail of the types of international school links and trips which are organised, for example:

'French immersion course for A level and GCSE pupils in France.'

'As an international school committed to global learning we have a wealth of international schools and partnerships and there is a great deal of staff and student mobility. We have two Erasmus+ projects in place, and there is a big staff commitment to the international dimension. We have 20 staff taking language courses all over Europe in one project. We are also a Confucius Classroom. Staff have visited China and one teacher has done the Chinese immersion course at the Confucius Institute. We have lots of school links all over the world in the EU and beyond.'

'We have twinned with a school in Brittany. We are collaborating on projects and organizing an annual exchange programme. We send Year 12 pupils to undertake a period of work experience in France or Belgium each year.'

'The MFL department (and the school) has three partners in France. One partner is in Péronnas, and we have organised a trip there after winning Lefèvre funding. Another partner is in Wassigny. This exchange is taking place over the next few months after we won Erasmus+ funding. The third partner is outside Paris.'

It is perhaps noteworthy that funding from sources such as Erasmus+ is vital in supporting some of this activity. This may be adversely affected by the UK's decision to leave the EU.

However, in contrast to the above, there is also qualitative evidence of a decline in international activity. The reasons for this include an increasing disinclination to stay in other people's homes, and concerns about the risks of foreign exchanges:

'This year we have had to cancel our trip to France due to lack of demand.'

It is perhaps noteworthy that funding from sources such as Erasmus+ is vital in supporting some of this activity. This may be adversely affected by the UK's decision to leave the EU.

'We are looking into developing links to other schools via Skype, emails or exchange. The problem with exchanges is that our pupils have very limited interest and a lot of issues in staying with someone else's family.'

'Our exchange, which had previously been active for nearly 20 years, failed due to lack of pupils wanting to participate. We had a trip abroad which has been ongoing for more than eight years, this also failed this year due to lack of pupils wanting to participate. We used to go to France every other year but this has stopped since the terror attacks in Paris.'

'Also, we used to do exchanges with a French school but this ceased in 2005 when French families had to be vetted by the police. Also the risk involved for the organiser were too great in a claim society.'

These reasons are very similar to those identified from Language Trends research carried out recently in secondary schools in England.

The level of engagement in international activities varies greatly between schools. While there are 13 schools in our sample which are not involved in any of the activities listed (and no 'other' either), some ten schools organise four or more of the named opportunities.

FIGURE 26:

Number of activities	Count of Schools
0	13
1	57
2	23
3	12
4	5
5	3
6	1
7	1
Blank	3
Grand Total	118

All but one of the ten schools which have high levels of international engagement have low levels of pupil eligibility for free school meals

The degree to which schools engage in international activity correlates with socio-economic circumstances: there is a statistically significant relationship between lower levels of FSM eligibility and engaging with more than one activity. In addition, all but one of the ten schools which have high levels of international engagement have low levels of pupil eligibility for free school meals.

Key points

- More than four out of five schools (82 per cent) report that they organise foreign trips for pupils.
- Pupil exchanges are being adversely affected by an increasing disinclination on the part of both parents and pupils to stay in other people's homes and, in some cases, because of an uncertain political climate and increasing perceptions of risk.
- Levels of international engagement are linked to socio-economic circumstances with low levels of FSM being associated with multiple examples of international activity being arranged by the school.

Impact of Brexit

Following the outcome of the June 2016 referendum on the UK's membership of the EU, we were interested to find out whether the decision to leave had had an impact of any kind on the teaching of MFL in schools. Just over two thirds of those respondents who answered the question in our survey say that they have not noticed any impact on the teaching of MFL in their school – though many qualify this, saying 'not yet'. Of the remaining one third who express the view that the outcome of the referendum has had an impact, almost all say that the impact has been negative.

For some the outcome of the referendum has either had an adverse effect on pupil motivation for the learning of foreign languages or it has reinforced an already negative view of the value of learning a foreign language, for example:

'Since Brexit, pupils have voiced many negative points of view on the 'point' in learning an MFL. Plus some pupils who may have carried on to A-Level with a view to (studying them at) university and a year abroad have expressed doubt due to uncertainty because of Brexit.'

'Pupils regard the fact that the UK is leaving the EU as another reason NOT to continue with their studies of languages beyond Key Stage 3.'

'Pupils are asking what the point is of carrying on with a language since we are coming out of Europe.'

'Pupils feel that European languages are less relevant as they are less likely to be able to work there.'

Other respondents are more concerned at the potential impact of Brexit on the employment of teaching staff for MFL and wonder whether or not those teachers who are of EU origin will be able to continue living and working in Wales once the UK concludes its negotiations with the EU. Some examples of such concerns are as follows:

'Depending on Brexit decisions three of the five members of our department may no longer be welcome to live in Wales!'

'The Head of Department is Belgian and wondering how Brexit may impact her status in Britain.'

A very small minority of respondents comment that the referendum has given them a unique opportunity to promote the benefits of languages and to raise the profile of MFL in their school, for example:

'We initially saw a decline in interest in languages as pupils thought leaving the EU meant that languages were less important. However, after talks and Routes into Languages initiatives, their opinions have changed.'

'We are trying to sell it as more important than ever as the official language of the EU is unlikely to continue to be English.'

'Thanks to the efforts of our regional consortium at raising the profile of MFL, the visits and so on have drawn attention to the fact that we need to be more competitive in the world from now on.'

Following the outcome of the June 2016 referendum on the UK's membership of the EU, we were interested to find out whether the decision to leave had had an impact of any kind on the teaching of MFL in schools

Key points

- The majority of schools in Wales say they have not yet seen any impact, positive or negative, on the teaching of MFL following the June 2016 referendum.
- Where there has been an impact, it is overwhelmingly negative and generally takes the form of pupils questioning the value of learning languages.

Issues of concern

At the end of our survey we provide an opportunity for respondents to comment on any aspect of MFL teaching in Welsh secondary schools which they would like to say something further about or which we have not covered in our questions. As in previous years, this results in a rich variety of comments on a wide range of topics.

Although covered by questions in the survey itself, some respondents chose to express further their appreciation of the work of one or two of the regional consortia. There is evidence that, in some areas of the country, the *Global Futures* initiative is providing both opportunities for professional development and the sharing of good practice as well as giving MFL teachers much needed support in promoting the subject and its merits to pupils, for example:

'It is still very hard to convince pupils to continue their language studies and it requires a lot of effort and energy from the department. However, the support from our regional consortium has been fantastic and the strategies are seen to be working.'

'We have worked very hard and with support from our regional consortium are delighted that our numbers are increasing but it is a battle.'

On a different and less positive topic, many respondents express grave concern about the future of their subject. Changes made in the way that pupils in Year 9 select their subjects for GCSE through the options process, the introduction of the Welsh Baccalaureate and compulsory, long course, Welsh as well as the recent changes to GCSE and A level specifications aimed at making the examinations more rigorous, all conspire to discourage pupils from choosing to study a foreign language to GCSE level and beyond. The quantitative data in our survey report provide evidence to support these and other comments made by teachers:

'We work very hard to promote languages, pupils are aware and believe languages are important but they find it very difficult. They are also frustrated at the limited choice of options available once they have picked the Welsh Bacc and triple science. Languages is not always a priority over the rest of the subjects. I think the exams are also very difficult for the majority of pupils and those pupils will choose a subject in which they can guarantee what they consider to be a good grade.'

'Compulsory Full Course GCSE Welsh will have a very detrimental effect on the uptake of MFL. Changes to the specs at both Key Stages 4 and 5 will sadly make languages elite again.'

'An increased difficulty in examinations is not helping pupil retention. We have limited Key Stage 3 time to develop pupils' skills to these higher levels. I am concerned that we now have a monopoly for an exam board and I am concerned over the difference in marking at GCSE level between languages, especially with regard to communication over grammatical accuracy.'

There is evidence that, in some areas of the country, the *Global Futures* initiative is providing both opportunities for professional development and the sharing of good practice

'With the pressure on pupils to achieve level 2 in maths and English, option subjects at Key Stage 4 are getting less and less contact time with pupils. This year Key Stage 4 pupils have French for only 2 hours a week.'

The responsibility for many of the challenges MFL teachers are facing in provision and take up of their subject is seen by some as being with school leadership. A number of respondents are outspoken in their criticism of school leaders as the following sample of comment shows:

'Languages are not seen as important, as not part of the core. We are losing a battle as our senior leadership team has told us we are not important. Our pupils are at a clear disadvantage in a global workplace. When will the Welsh Government realise this? Unless MFL is made to count in school measures and are part of Estyn judgements for school performance, we will continue as an unimportant subject with declining numbers. So sad.'

In addition, many respondents express the view that the national apathy towards foreign languages and the perceived lack of positive action by government, the media and other influential bodies is also helping to drive modern foreign languages into an increasingly more fragile position from which it will be very difficult to recover. The comments from respondents express their frustration and concern very clearly, for example:

'I feel that MFL is under-supported by senior leadership teams in schools. If external agencies put more pressure on schools to value languages in terms of a facilitator subject for university, a subject needed by employers etc. then we would not be in the problematic situation we are now. However, articles on the news, in the papers are only promoted by us as an MFL department, and as such we can only work within the parameters given: restricted options due to the Welsh Bacc and Welsh as a second language GCSE and increasingly difficult GCSE and AS/A2 exams. If external agencies, stakeholders and exam boards don't officially support MFL departments in a more formal way, the situation will not be reversed.'

'There needs to be more emphasis on the academic and cultural value of MFL. You don't have to do three sciences to be successful in life – the BMA is requiring a language GCSE for all Medicine students from September 2017. It is important to make the most of this information and other similar factors. Year 9 is the important year for us to target (it is too late by the sixth form).'

'The decline in the number of pupils taking languages is alarming. The importance of MFL needs to be promoted more by the government.'

'Pupils seem to value the subject less - school and indeed the system put greater store on maths, English, Welsh and science. In 20 years in one school we have gone from MFL being the norm to it being quite a specialist little niche - not good for the health of our children's future.'

What is clear from the many open comments provided by teachers of MFL responding to our survey is that they are hardworking professionals who are passionate about their subject and driven by a desire to see their pupils develop skills and knowledge which will serve them well throughout their adult lives. Many teachers clearly feel unsupported and isolated in their efforts to promote the benefits of skill in MFL.

The responsibility for many of the challenges MFL teachers are facing in provision and take up of their subject is seen by some as being with school leadership

Key points

- The regional consortia established under the Global Futures initiative are having a positive impact in a number of areas of the country and the work of the individuals concerned is much appreciated.
- Teachers of MFL feel overwhelmed by a range of factors including changes to the options system, new GCSE and A level specifications, the introduction of the Welsh Baccalaureate and a reduction in teaching hours for MFL and are extremely concerned for the future of their subject.
- Many teachers are frustrated by the apparent lack of support and understanding from school-based leaders.
- Teachers believe that the national apathy towards languages and other cultures is largely to blame for the current state of MFL in schools and would urge the government, school leaders, specialist organisations and other influential bodies to speak out more loudly for the benefits of languages to society and individuals.



Chapter 5

Conclusions



1. The situation and prospects for MFL remain extremely challenging with interventions mitigating the impact of underlying problems rather than achieving systemic change

Teachers of MFL report feeling overwhelmed by a range of factors including changes to the options system, new GCSE and A level specifications, the introduction of the Welsh Baccalaureate and a reduction in teaching hours for MFL, and are extremely concerned for the future of their subject. The outlook for MFL looks even more fragile in the context of financial pressures on schools and the potential impact of leaving the European Union.

Take up of MFL in Key Stage 4 continues to fall, in both Year 10 and Year 11, indicating that numbers for GCSE will decline further in 2017 and 2018. The main reasons given for declining numbers are the predominance of compulsory subjects and the introduction of the Welsh Baccalaureate which has reduced the number of free option slots. The situation for MFL at post 16 is extremely fragile and becoming more so in a climate of financial constraints where schools cannot afford to run courses for very small numbers of pupils. The difficulty of the AS and AL examinations, competition from other subjects, and a smaller pool of GCSE students to draw on are given as reasons for declining numbers for MFL post-16.

MFL provision is being further threatened by an underlying shortage of teachers, a situation which is likely to become critical if the supply of teachers from other EU countries runs dry post-Brexit – some 34 per cent of schools are reliant on such teachers to provide MFL teaching. The erosion of the subject over a number of years has meant that most MFL departments are very small, just one or two teachers, and some schools are relying on teachers who are not qualified in the subject to bridge gaps. Small numbers for MFL and small departments dependent on unqualified or part-time teachers can lead to a downward spiral for the subject as expertise is eroded, training opportunities are more difficult to access, and the profile of the subject within the school shrinks. Once there is an expectation that numbers for the subject will be low, this can be compounded by the way that option blocks are structured.

All these factors are weighted against the best efforts of teachers, regional coordinators and partners in the Global Futures initiative to promote the subject. It seems unlikely that step change will be achieved without addressing the manifold systemic issues which prevent wide-scale participation in the subject beyond the most basic level. The most significant of these are the inferior status of MFL in relation to English and Welsh, the amount of curriculum time available in relation to the difficulty of the exams, and the perceived value for careers in relation to other subjects. School leaders will need to be part of the mix in addressing these issues at system level in tandem with the development of the new curriculum.

2. Global Futures is already having some impact and the work of the regional consortia is appreciated by MFL teachers

The Welsh Government should be pleased that as many as 72 per cent of schools participating in this year's Language Trends survey report having received support from their regional consortium or centre of excellence. Teachers comment favourably on the support they have received and have particularly appreciated opportunities for CPD in MFL and to share practice with others face-to-face. This is a tribute to the particular individuals heading up some of the regional consortia.

Take up of MFL in Key Stage 4 continues to fall, in both Year 10 and Year 11, indicating that numbers for GCSE will decline further in 2017 and 2018

The Global Futures plan has undoubtedly already shown some successful impact and a small number of schools are reporting increases in numbers both at Key Stage 4 and post-16. Where this has been the case, it has been the result of strenuous efforts by schools and regional consortia.

The offer of support for the development of MFL in primary schools is the area which has been least exploited or appreciated by schools so far and this remains a key area for development. At the same time, there is the more urgent challenge of safeguarding the position of the subject in Key Stage 4 and beyond before a tipping point is reached where schools are no longer able to offer the subject and expertise is lost. It seems evident that significantly more resource and effort will be needed to realise these two interconnected demands.

3. The development of the new National Curriculum for Wales provides a unique opportunity to develop 'triple language' with the same status and value as 'triple science'

The main systemic problem to be overcome is the predominance of compulsory subjects and the extra time being given to Welsh, English and Maths which is crowding out the place of MFL in the Welsh curriculum. This casts MFL in opposition to Welsh and English instead of capturing the potential for all language subjects to support each other. The responses to our survey show how much work there is to be done to develop the teaching of English and Welsh at primary school level as a supportive foundation for the subsequent learning of foreign languages: with over 60 per cent of teachers in our survey considering that it currently provides little or no preparation. This is the challenge which must now be overcome as the new Area of Learning and Experience in Languages, Literacy and Communication is developed.

The next few years provide a unique opportunity to remedy the situation, drawing on the expertise of teachers who have a deep understanding of the potential of bilingualism to benefit the learning of third and subsequent languages, especially but in no sense exclusively in Welsh medium schools. The Welsh Government should build on this expertise in recasting MFL as an essential element within the new curriculum area, promoting the achievement of 'triple language' qualifications, after the model of 'triple science', as an aspiration for all. In doing so it will be able to draw on the appetite for change which is evident in MFL teachers' heartfelt appeals for greater public support for their subject.

The transformation necessary to achieve the vision of making Wales 'bilingual plus one', requires a scale of effort and public profile of a significantly greater order than is evident at present. It must draw in the support of school leaders, specialist organisations and other influential bodies throughout Wales and beyond.

The Welsh Government should build on this expertise in recasting MFL as an essential element within the new curriculum area

Appendix – Response profile

Secondary State Schools (WALES)

RESPONSE RATE

	Base	Response	Response Rate
Secondary	210	118	56.2%

RESPONSE PROFILE

Age Range	Base raw	Base %	Response raw	Response %
Middle Schools (ages 3 - 16)	4	1.9%	3	2.5%
Middle Schools (ages 3 - 19)	5	2.4%	3	2.5%
Middle Schools (ages 4 - 19)	1	0.5%	0	0.0%
Secondary (ages 11 - 16)	55	26.2%	30	25.4%
Secondary (ages 11 - 19)	145	69.0%	82	69.5%

Education consortia	Base raw	Base %	Response raw	Response %
North Wales	55	26.2%	30	25.4%
South West and Mid Wales	62	29.5%	32	27.1%
Central South Wales	57	27.1%	32	27.1%
South East Wales	36	17.1%	24	20.3%

School Type	Base raw	Base %	Response raw	Response %
Community School	181	86.2%	104	88.1%
Voluntary Aided School	19	9.0%	10	8.5%
Voluntary Controlled School	2	1.0%	1	0.8%
Foundation School	8	3.8%	3	2.5%

Language	Base raw	Base %	Response raw	Response %
Welsh Medium - Welsh	21	10.0%	13	11.0%
Welsh Medium - Bilingual (Type A)	18	8.6%	11	9.3%
Welsh Medium - Bilingual (Type B)	12	5.7%	10	8.5%
Welsh Medium - Bilingual (Type C)	4	1.9%	4	3.4%
English Medium - English Medium	147	70.0%	75	63.6%
English Medium - English with significant Welsh	8	3.8%	5	4.2%



British Council Wales 1 Kingsway, Cardiff CF10 3AQ

Tel 0161 957 7755 Email general.enquiries@britishcouncil.org Website <https://wales.britishcouncil.org/en>

Twitter @BCouncil_Wales Facebook www.facebook.com/BritishCouncilWales

©British Council 2017

The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities.