



INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGES IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN WALES

LANGUAGE TRENDS WALES

RESEARCH REPORT 2019

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INTRODUCTION

This year's Language Trends Wales presents the findings of the fifth annual survey of secondary schools - and the second such survey of primary schools in Wales - designed to gather information about the current situation for Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)¹ teaching and learning in Wales. Its aims are to assess the impact of policy measures in relation to languages and to analyse strengths and weaknesses based both on quantitative evidence and on views expressed by teachers.

**“IF YOU TALK TO A MAN
IN A LANGUAGE HE
UNDERSTANDS, THAT
GOES TO HIS HEAD.**

**IF YOU TALK TO HIM IN
HIS LANGUAGE, THAT
GOES TO HIS HEART.”**

NELSON MANDELA

Primary schools were first surveyed in 2016 to establish a baseline of provision for MFL / international languages in primary schools in the context of Welsh Government aspirations to develop teaching of the subject in Key Stage 2 as part of the Global Futures plan (2015-2020).²

This year's survey was carried out from March to May 2019 and gathered evidence from 155 primary and 114 secondary schools equating to response rates of 12.5% and 55% respectively. This was slightly below the response rates from primary schools in 2016 (15%) and from secondary schools in 2018 (65%). However, the achieved samples are a good match with the national profiles of primary and secondary schools across Wales in terms of regional distribution, age range of pupils, school type and medium of instruction (full details are provided in the Appendix).

By matching the responses from schools to publicly available data about characteristics such as the proportion of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), region, school type and medium of instruction, we were able to search for patterns of provision and practice emerging across Wales.³ These are noted in the text where they are statistically significant.

As in previous years, the results of the survey are prefaced with an analysis of the latest (2019) GCSE and A-Level examinations entries, showing trends in take-up for MFL in Wales since the early 2000's. This information sets the responses of schools within a broader context and provides insights, which are useful in interpreting them.

1 We use the term 'international languages' in this report when referring to developments in relation to the new curriculum, and 'MFL' (Modern Foreign Languages) to refer to the subject as taught within the current secondary curriculum.

2 Welsh Government, *Global Futures, a plan to improve and promote modern foreign languages in Wales 2015-2020*. See also the first year (<https://gov.wales/written-statement-global-futures-year-our-plan>) and second year (<https://gov.wales/written-statement-global-futures-two-years-our-plan>) reports.

3 This year the Welsh data on FSM was provided as raw figures rounded to the nearest 5. For schools where this data was suppressed, due to raw figures being between 0 and 4, the mid-point of 2 was used to estimate the percentages.

POLICY BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Three key issues, identified in last year's survey, continue to dominate the policy context for this year's report:

- The continuing, long-standing decline in the teaching and learning of modern foreign languages (MFL) in secondary schools in Wales, which the Welsh Government is seeking to address through its Global Futures 2015-2020 policy, which is aimed at improving the situation for languages other than Welsh and English.
- The aspiration to introduce the teaching of 'international languages' into the primary school curriculum, articulated in the new curriculum for Wales, as well as the Global Futures ambition of building towards a 'bilingual plus 1' system.
- The vast potential for synergy between the teaching of Welsh, English and international languages offered by the creation of the new curriculum, which conceptualises all language subjects as integrated.

This year's surveys explored issues relevant to these themes and, as concern about the UK's 'language deficit' continues to increase, we also looked at wider attitudes to language learning and its value to individuals and society.

INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The Welsh Government's aspiration to develop MFL in Key Stage 2 as part of the Global Futures plan has been placed in a clearer context in the light of the new curriculum for Wales, which will introduce a single curriculum Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE) for Languages, Literacy and Communication from age 3.⁴

In 2016, only 28% of schools responding to the survey reported providing some foreign language teaching. However, an impact study published earlier this year reported that primary schools that have introduced international languages note a range of positive impacts on pupils including improved literacy and oracy skills as well as progress in communication skills and engagement with learning.⁵ This year's research looked to identify evidence of progress against the 2016 baseline.

IMPACT OF GLOBAL FUTURES AND PLANNING FOR INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGES WITHIN THE NEW CURRICULUM

In the light of an upcoming review of Global Futures, both primary and secondary schools were asked to what extent they had engaged with activities provided through the initiative and what future support they would welcome. Secondary schools were asked to what extent they considered Global Futures had improved the situation for MFL; whether their MFL department had already been involved in planning for the new curriculum; as well as their opinion on the prospects for their subject. They were also asked for their perspectives on the development of international languages in primary schools and the extent to which they already work with their local feeder schools on language issues.

Primary schools not yet teaching international languages were asked how they envisaged catering for this element within the new curriculum area of Languages, Literacy and Communication.

DECLINE IN TAKE-UP FOR MFL AT KEY STAGE 4 AND POST-16

GCSE and A-Level entries for MFL in Wales have been in serious decline since the beginning of the 2000s. Previous Language Trends surveys have revealed how MFL has become increasingly marginalised in Welsh secondary schools, with the decline in take-up attributed variously to: the perceived difficulty of MFL content and examinations in comparison to other subjects; insufficient curriculum time; timetabling of options; the low value placed on language skills; and a lack of accountability for increasing take-up. These and other factors are explored further in this year's report.

Last year's Language Trends report highlighted the severity of the ongoing collapse of take-up for MFL Post-16. Given the urgency of the situation, this year's survey again dedicated considerable space to investigating post-16 issues. In summer 2018, pupils and schools received results from the first sitting of new GCSE and A-Level examinations in MFL. This year's survey therefore provided the first opportunity for secondary teachers to report on the response to these in their schools and the impact on teaching and take-up.

ATTITUDES AND SOCIAL FACTORS

Previous Language Trends surveys have shown that low take-up for MFL at GCSE is linked to schools with higher levels of social deprivation, as measured by the proportion of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and we again explore this issue.

Concern about the UK's 'language deficit' has been mounting over several years, despite compelling evidence of the importance of languages for trade, business and research indicating that employers view languages as a 'value-added skill'⁶. A coalition of organisations, including the British Council, has joined the British Academy's call for a national strategy to enhance engagement with the rest of the world, declaring that 'monolingualism is the illiteracy of the 21st century'⁷. These organisations have called for attitudinal change, with opportunities to progress in language learning open to all at all life stages.

The survey probes the attitudes of parents and the local community towards the learning of international languages; the stance of senior school leaders in relation to MFL; and whether Brexit is affecting pupils' motivation to study foreign languages and/or Welsh.

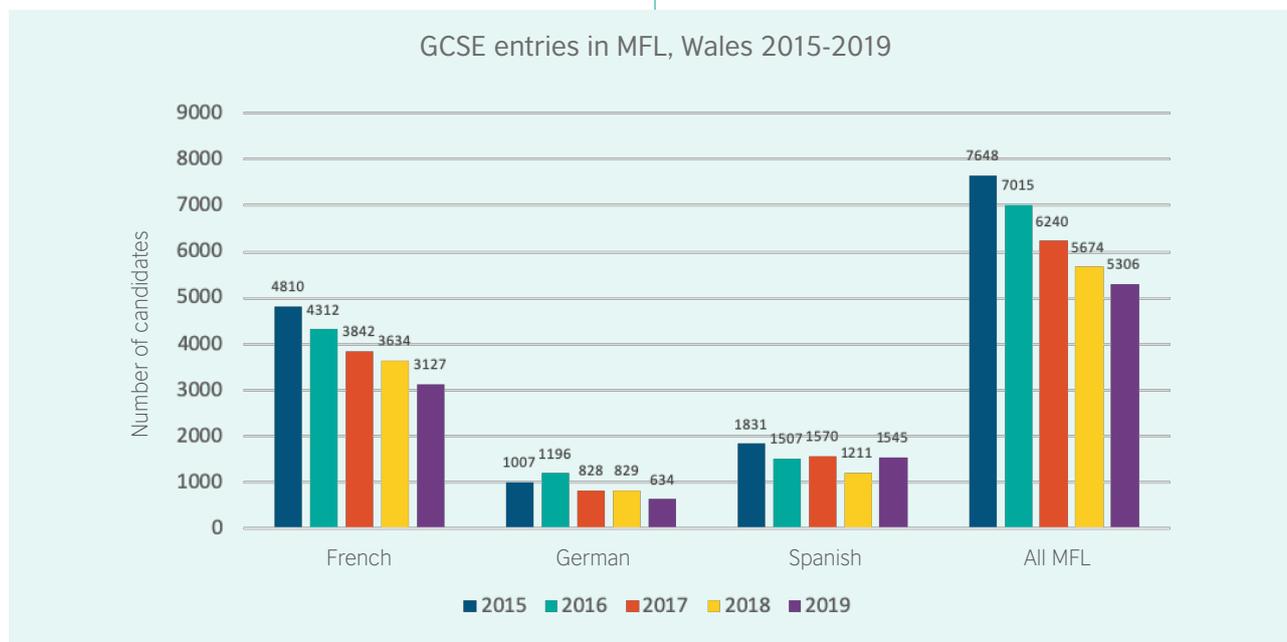
4 Welsh Government, *Successful Futures, Independent Review of Curriculum and Assessment Arrangements in Wales*, Professor Graham Donaldson, 2015. It is intended that the new curriculum will be used throughout Wales by 2022.

5 British Council Wales, *Developing multilingualism in primary schools in Wales: an impact study*, Arad Research, 2019

6 British Academy, *Born Global – Rethinking Language Policy for 21st Century Britain*, 2013

7 The British Academy, *Languages in the UK. A call for action*, (2019) <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/languages-uk-academies-statement>

EXAM FIGURES



Changes in GCSE entries between 2015-19 and 2010-14

	French	German	Spanish	All MFL	All GCSE subjects
2015-2019	-35%	-37%	-16%	-28%	+9%
2010-2014	-29%	-33%	-7%	-25%	-7%

Over the past five years, there has been a 28% decline in entries for GCSE languages, with French and German seeing falls of 35% and 37% respectively over this period. While Spanish presents a slightly more stable picture, there has been a 16% decline in entries between 2015 and 2019.⁸ Entries for ‘other’ modern languages,⁹ which account for around 10% of total language entries, grew 2% over the period to 580 entries in 2019.

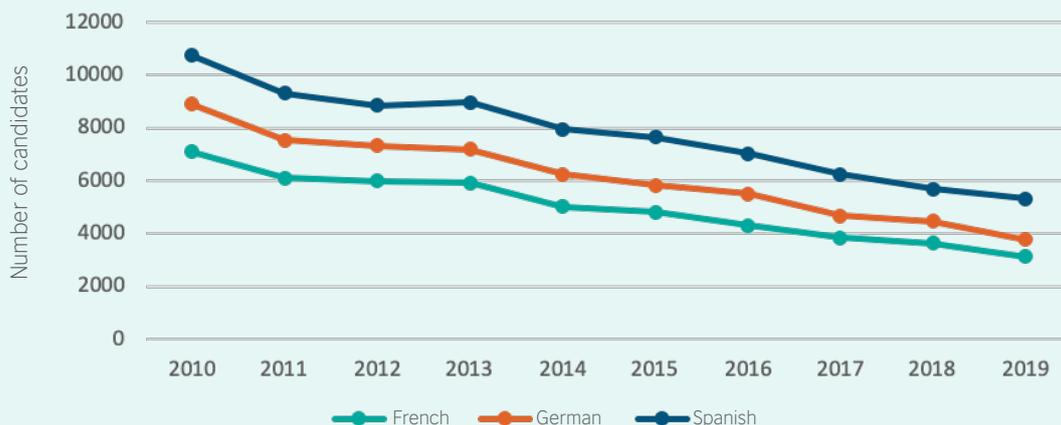
Between 2018 and 2019, this pattern of decline continued with an overall 7% decrease in Modern Foreign Language GCSEs, with French down 14% on 2018 and German down 24%. However, numbers for Spanish rose by 28%, recovering some of the decline from the previous year.

There was already concern about rapid decline in MFL entries before the introduction of the Global Futures plan, which began in 2015. Since then, the rate of decline has slightly accelerated compared to the previous 5-year period.

While GCSE entries for MFL have been in decline for many years, we have seen a particularly sharp decline in Wales over the last 10 years, with a 48% fall in MFL entries since 2010. The figures show a 56% decline in French, a 65% drop German and a 16% reduction in Spanish.

Over the 5-year period of the Global Futures plan, GCSE entries for Welsh Second Language rose by 77%, while those for Welsh First Language declined by 5%.¹⁰ Entries for all GCSE subjects rose by 9%.

GCSE entries for French, German and Spanish, 2010-2019



GCSE entries for Welsh Second Language, Welsh First Language and MFL¹¹



8 Figures compiled from data for Wales published by the Joint Qualifications Council (JCQ).

9 Welsh GCSEs in MFL are only provided in French, German and Spanish. Candidates may sit up to 18 languages provided by English exam boards, including, Arabic, Chinese, Italian, Russian, Turkish and Urdu. The breakdown by language is only provided for the UK as a whole.

10 The new Welsh Second Language course was introduced in 2017 and sat for the first time in 2019. It is a full course, replacing the previous full and short course exams.

11 Compiled by Alcantara Communications from data published at www.jcq.org.uk

A-Level entries for French, German and Spanish in Wales, selected years 2001-2019¹²



A-LEVEL

At A-Level, we have seen substantial ongoing declines in take-up for MFL for over 20 years. Since 2001, there has been a 70% fall in entries for French and an 80% decline in those for German. Spanish entries grew initially but have since also dropped back, leaving them at 22% lower than in 2001.

Between 2018 and 2019 there was an overall 5% decrease in entries for MFL, with small increases in German and Spanish A-level numbers offset by a decrease in French.



SURVEY FINDINGS: INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

39% of primary schools responding to the survey currently provide some teaching of international languages. This compares with 28% of respondents in 2016. This suggests that there has been an increase in primary provision for international languages over the past three years, and it provides us with a larger number of schools on which to base the analysis of current provision.

Of the 42 Welsh-medium primary schools in this year's sample, 52% teach an international language, compared with 33% of the 102 English-medium schools.¹³ While the sample is small, it does indicate that Welsh-medium schools are more likely to be teaching an international language than other types of schools.

There are also clear differences by local authority. None of the eight primary schools in Flintshire which responded to the survey, teach an international language, while eight of the twelve Cardiff schools do so, as do six of the ten in Ceredigion. More than half of schools in Anglesey, Neath Port Talbot, Carmarthenshire and Gwynedd teach an international language, whereas there was a very low incidence of international language teaching in Conwy, Monmouthshire, Pembrokeshire and Merthyr Tydfil.¹⁴

LANGUAGES TAUGHT

Two thirds of the schools which teach an international language (26% of all responding schools) teach French; smaller numbers teach German (5%), Spanish (7%) and other languages (10%).

PROVISION BY YEAR GROUP

Schools are more likely to teach an international language in the upper years of Key Stage 2, with 85% of those which do so providing access in Year 5 and/or Year 6 and 57% in Years 3 and/or 4. Just over a quarter of primary schools which teach an international language (28%) report doing so in Key Stage 1.

LANGUAGE TEACHING OFFERED

One quarter (25%) of schools which teach an international language say they follow a systematic model of teaching in one or more-year groups. As a proportion of all responding schools, this is 10%, the same percentage (of total respondents) as reported in 2016.¹⁵

» *The French secondary teacher gives Year 5 & 6 (one class) a French lesson once a week; this includes an introduction to French culture (Welsh medium).*

» *Weekly Mandarin sessions provided by the cluster High School from Year 1-6.*

For around a third of those schools which are involved in international language teaching, this takes the form of occasional language learning during class time:

» *A few weeks at end of Summer term teaching basic French.*

» *Mandarin student comes into Year 4 for block afternoons over a term.*

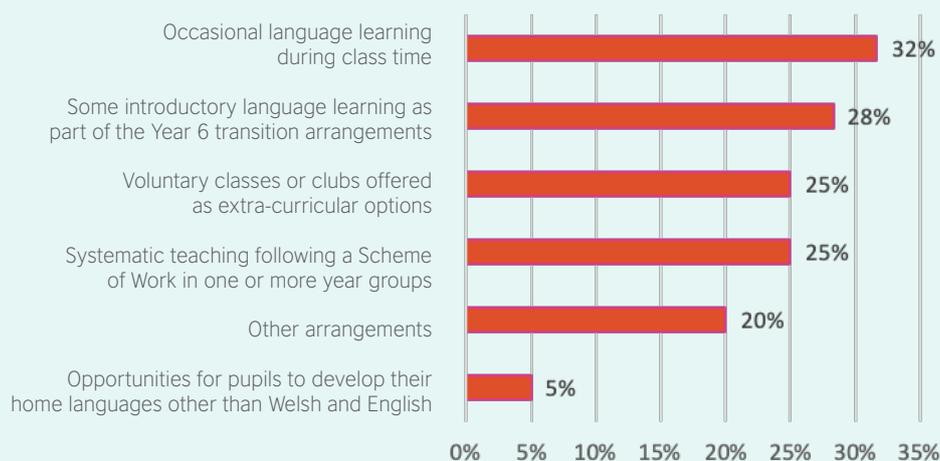
12 Compiled by Alcantara Communications from data published at www.jcq.org.uk

13 There were 11 responding schools which are 'Dual stream', Bilingual or 'English with significant Welsh', 5 of which report teaching an international language in addition to English and Welsh.

14 A breakdown of responding schools by region and medium of instruction is given in the Appendix.

15 The option choices provided for respondents were different in 2016, so it is not possible to show comparative figures for all types of provision listed in 2019.

How do teachers describe the types of language teaching they offer?



Base = 60. Multiple responses permitted

Introductory language learning is provided as part of transition arrangements with secondary schools in 28% of primary schools offering international languages:

- » *During the last half term, Year 6 pupils are invited to attend an after-school club...to introduce them to another language and gain confidence before commencing secondary school, covering greetings, colours, numbers, days of the week etc.*
- » *Secondary teacher from the local secondary school once a week for a term for Year 6.*

No Welsh-medium or Bilingual schools in our sample offered voluntary classes or extra-curricular clubs for international languages. Almost all the 15 schools that offered this provision were English-medium, with two Dual-Stream schools:

- » *Paid Lunchtime club run by Lingotots.*
- » *Private lessons during lunch time or after school are available to every Reception pupil in Year 6 if they choose to pay for them. The school offers these free of charge to pupils who qualify for free school meals.*

Several schools reported that they combined provision for different languages, offering diverse learning opportunities throughout the school:

- » *We are working with the Goethe-Institut on a language project. We offer an after school German Club. Year 6 children take part in French lessons every two weeks as part of a transition project with the local secondary school.*

- » *Mandarin language or cultural activities through the school. French in Years 3 and 4. Italian in Years 5 and 6.*

WHO DOES THE TEACHING?

Primary schools are drawing on a diverse range of teachers to deliver international languages. More than a third (37%) of those doing so rely on class teachers. Five schools have a specialist language teacher as a member of staff and another three make use of a peripatetic specialist language teacher.

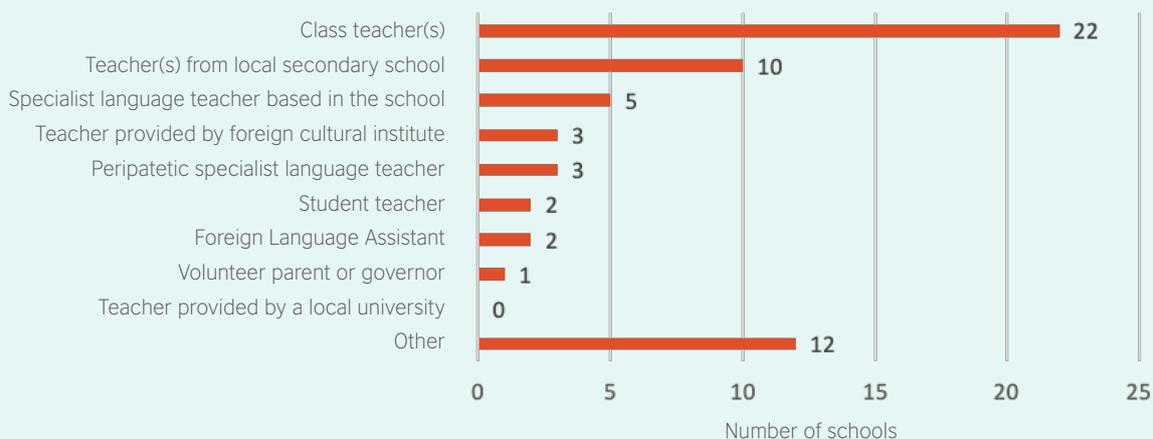
A wide range of people providing language teaching are cited under 'other', including 'Teaching Assistant', 'Student on exchange' and 'Headteacher'. One school also mentioned the 'Power Language Platform,' which supports class teachers in introducing simple words and phrases. The [Cerdd Iaith](#) (*Listening to Languages*) project was also mentioned as having provided a designated teacher of Spanish.¹⁶

With the caveat that the percentages are based on small numbers, the proportions are similar to 2016, albeit with a greater likelihood of class teachers being involved in delivering international languages (37% in 2019, 30% in 2016) and less reliance on volunteer parents or governors (2% in 2019, 9% in 2016).

INTEGRATION OF INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGES WITH WELSH AND ENGLISH

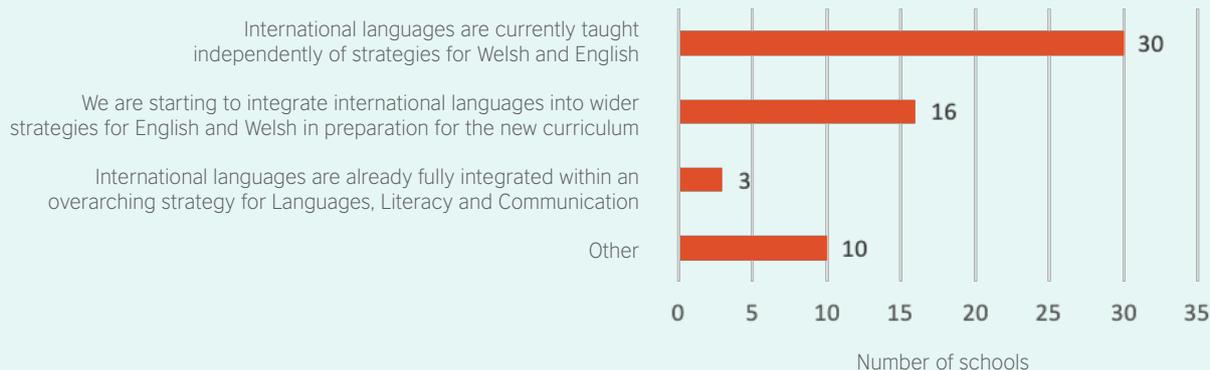
In more than half of schools teaching an international language, this is done independently of strategies for teaching Welsh and English.

Who does the teaching of MFL at primary schools?



Base = 60, single responses only

To what extent do schools have an integrated strategy for the teaching of Welsh, English and international languages?



Base = 59

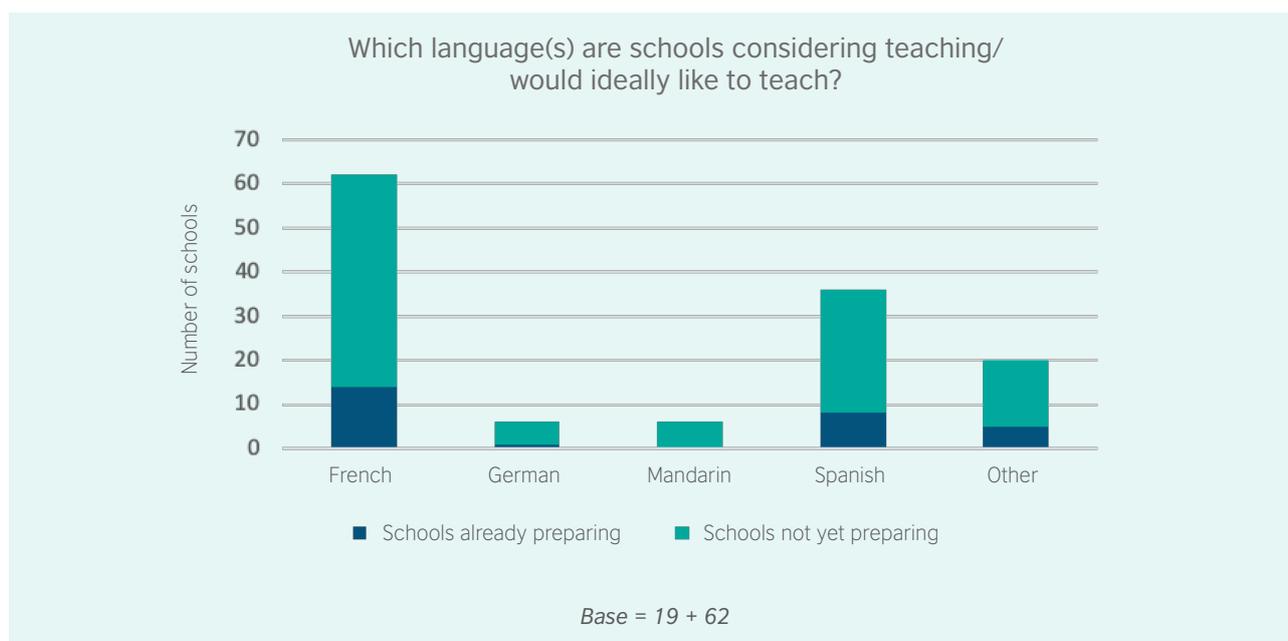
While 16 schools (11 English-medium, 5 Welsh-medium) said they were starting to integrate international languages into wider strategies for English and Welsh, only three (2 English-medium, 1 Welsh-medium) said that they were already fully integrated. These proportions reflect the national profile of schools by medium of instruction.

The availability of external support such as secondary schools or Language Assistants to provide the teaching are cited as barriers to integrating international languages in schools - particularly for schools in the early stages of developing teaching¹⁷.

One school, which teaches both Chinese and Spanish, said that although Chinese was taught independently of strategies for Welsh and English, preparations were under way to integrate Spanish into wider strategies in preparation for the new curriculum.

16 **Cerdd Iaith/Listening to Language** is a creative learning project which has been integrating music and language learning in primary schools in South and West Wales. Partners include British Council Wales, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Yr Athrofa - the Institute of Education, and Ein Rhanbarth ar Waith (ERW).

17 This is reflected in the reducing number of schools in Wales hosting Language Assistants. Language Assistant numbers in Wales have declined by 95% - from 82 Language Assistants in 2012/13 to 4 in 2019/20.



PRIMARY SCHOOLS NOT TEACHING INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGES

20% (19 schools) of the 94 schools not yet teaching international languages are already preparing to teach one in line with the new curriculum for Wales. However, the majority of schools (68%) are not yet making any preparations and 12% do not intend to teach international languages.

French and Spanish are most frequently the languages under consideration, irrespective of whether schools have started planning. Other languages mentioned included Mandarin, German, Arabic, Italian, Bengali and Punjabi.

Of the 19 schools already preparing to teach international languages, over half (10) cited existing staff expertise as the reason for the choice of language. Other reasons included: the language was chosen to fit with topics; established links or experience in teaching the language; the language was taught by their local secondary school; 'it matches the languages profile of the children' (Arabic); and that the decision was made by the School Council.

PLANNING FOR INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGES IN THE NEW CURRICULUM

Schools that had not yet started planning were asked which models might be suitable for developing international language teaching in their school. Their responses show that external provision by secondary schools, universities or peripatetic teachers is favoured over schools themselves developing approaches integrated with provision for Welsh and/or English.

SCHOOLS NOT INTENDING TO TEACH INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGES

Of the 11 responding schools which said they did not intend to develop the teaching of international languages, five said their main reasons were that it was not compulsory to do so and five that it was not a priority as pupils already learn English and Welsh. Lack of expertise within the school was cited by four respondents and a further four said that the primary curriculum was already overcrowded.

Only one school said that there was no demand from parents (schools could tick up to 3 reasons). Two schools commented:

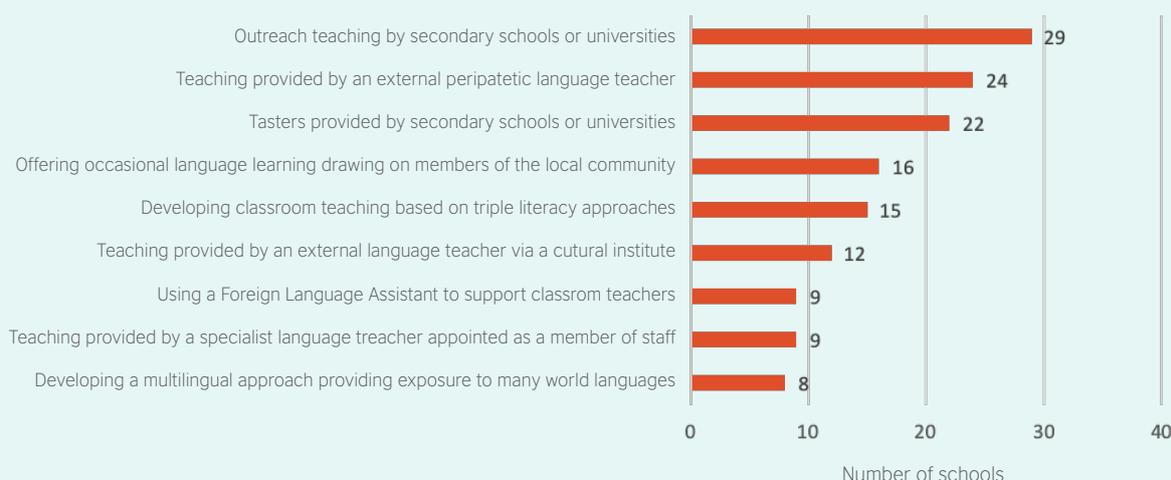
» *We have 92% EAL¹⁸ pupils so are teaching English to most pupils.*

» *Have tried to seek volunteer support on teaching of MFL – but have not yet been successful.*

However, this last school was able to report plans to work with a local secondary school on an MFL project.

There were no Welsh-medium schools in this group and all Welsh-medium schools responding to the survey are already teaching an international language or intending to do so.

Teachers answered, which of the following models might be most suitable in each school?



Base = 62 – up to three answers permitted

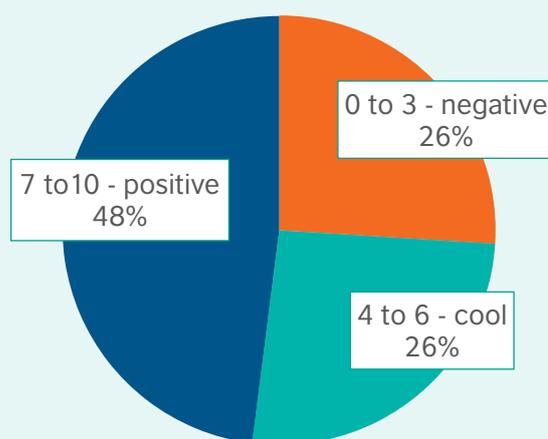
ATTITUDES OF PARENTS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Primary schools were asked to rate how positive they think parents and local communities are about the idea teaching of international languages on a scale of 0 (not at all supportive) to 10 (highly supportive).

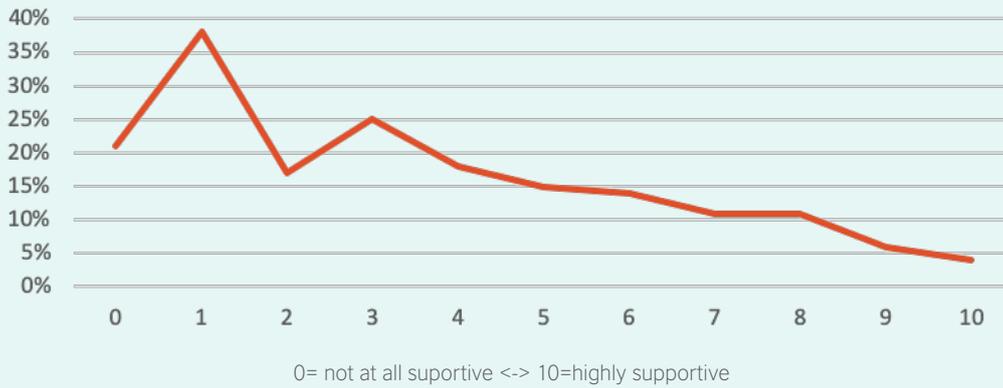
These responses were grouped into three categories – ‘positive’, ‘cool’ and ‘negative’ – showing that just under half the primary schools think that parental and community attitudes are generally positive towards the teaching of international languages, while around a quarter were thought to be negative and the remainder ‘cool’: neither strongly negative nor positive.

There is a statistically significant correlation between the level of support which schools judge is present for international languages in their local communities and the proportion of pupils eligible for Free School Meals. The more affluent the school’s profile, the more likely they are to report a high level of support for international languages among parents and the local community.

Groupings of responses on parental and community attitudes towards international languages

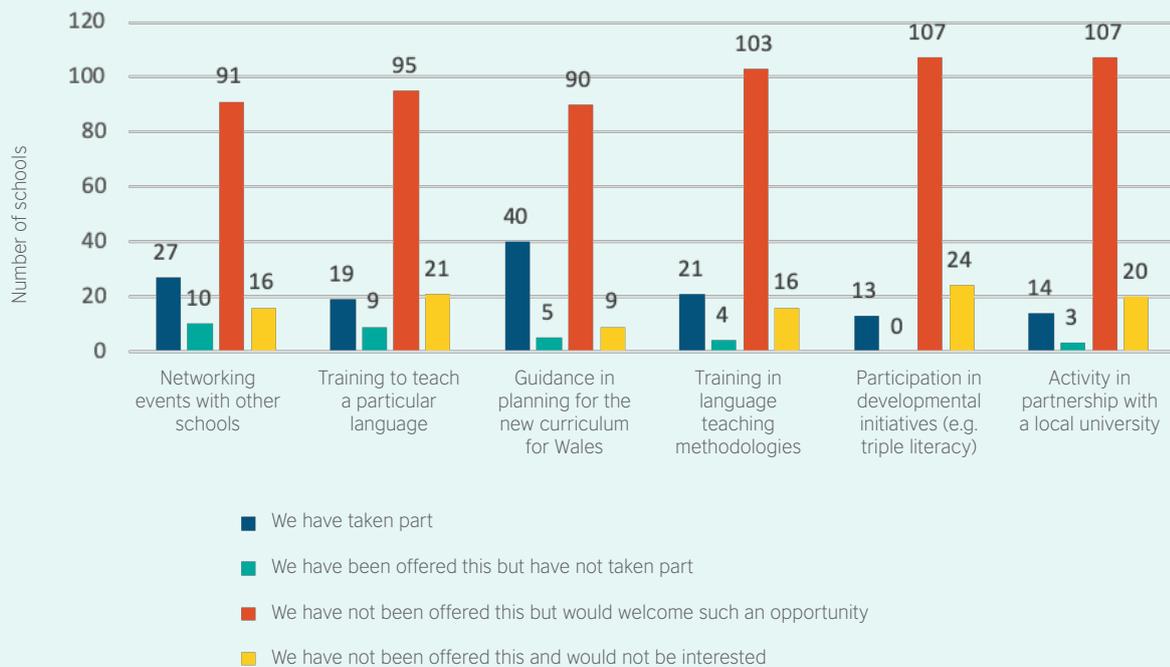


How supportive do you think parents and your local community are about your school teaching international languages by Free School Meals%



Base = 119

Has your school been offered, or taken part in, training connected to the teaching of international languages/MFL organised by your Regional Consortium as part of the Welsh Government's Global Futures plan?



Base = 144

ENGAGEMENT WITH GLOBAL FUTURES

All schools were asked if they had been offered, or taken part in, activities connected to international languages organised through Regional Consortia as part of the Welsh Government's Global Futures Plan. Just under half (46% - 66 schools) reported having taken part in at least one activity.

Ten schools (7%) had been invited to take part in one or more activities but had not done so. This leaves nearly half (47% - 68 schools) who have not received any opportunities to take part.

Although only a very small percentage of schools (7%) have been offered opportunities but not taken them up, there remain large proportions of primary schools – up to three quarters of responding schools in some cases – who have not been invited to take part in particular activities but who would welcome the opportunity to do so.

Looking at the chart below, the number of schools who would welcome an invitation to take part in each of the activities listed is more than double the number who have taken part up to now.

The numbers of schools who have not been invited to participate in particular activities, but would not be interested in doing so, is in all cases much lower. There is a strong appetite for further opportunities, particularly activities in partnership with local universities, developmental initiatives and training in language teaching methodologies. More than 70% of respondents said that they would welcome being offered these opportunities, and more than 60% said they would be interested in training to teach a particular language, networking events with other schools and guidance in planning for the new curriculum.

The most widespread activity in which primary schools have taken part is receiving guidance in planning for the new curriculum for Wales (40 out of the 144 schools), followed by 27 who have taken part in networking events with other local schools.

Some schools described other activities they had taken part in:

» *Completed action research with local university and Open University language programmes. We have also led and attended network events with other primaries.*

» *We have sent a staff member on a sabbatical this year for Welsh with the university and the strategies he has learned will be shared with all staff. We also plan to introduce German in September.*

Others demonstrated an awareness of their future needs:

» *Very willing to train staff – but companies/colleges need to give consideration to suitable times.*

» *As we have 2 [staff] who can speak French - what we really need is training for them on how best to introduce to primary school age pupils. Good resources available in Welsh will be key!*

Yet others expressed frustration at their experiences or the situation in their school:

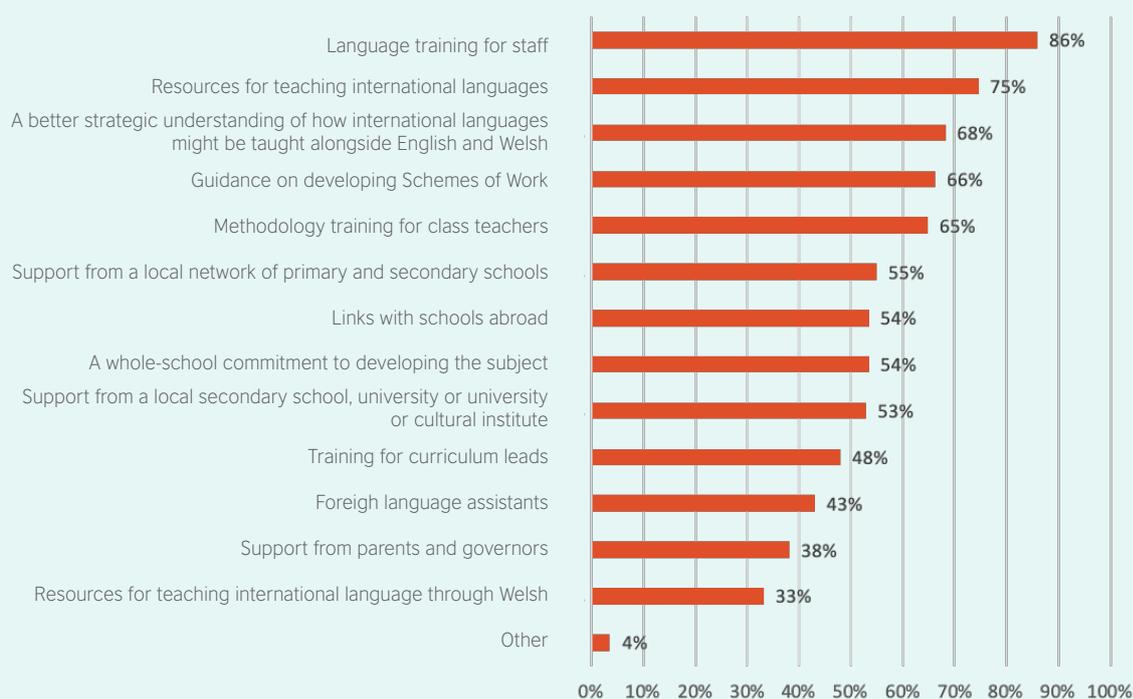
» *Nothing from [regional consortium]. We have had to access training opportunities directly through the British Council e.g. Connecting Classrooms and KA1 and KA2 visits.¹⁹*

» *I just don't see how teachers can take this on as well. We are still struggling to teach Welsh effectively.*

» *Our issue is funding - not interest. We currently have a three-year recovery plan and are struggling to even meet statutory requirements.*

19 This refers to visits funded through the European programme Erasmus+.

What would your school need to be able to develop provision for international languages?



Base = 142 – multiple responses permitted

SUPPORT NEEDED TO DEVELOP INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGES

Schools reported that widespread support is needed. Top of the list is language training for staff (required by 86% of responding schools), resources (75%) and a better strategic understanding of how international languages might be taught alongside English and Welsh (68%). They also highlighted a need for staff training including guidance on developing Schemes of Work, methodology training and support from local networks.

When asked which of these is the biggest barrier, two thirds confirmed that language training for staff is the key issue. Resources was only mentioned as the *main* barrier by 15% of schools. However, two new issues were mentioned: time for planning - mentioned by 14% of schools and funding (10%). These two issues also featured strongly in comments along with training and external support:

» *In small Welsh schools, getting pupils fully bilingual in two languages is a challenge. In addition, the number of staff to lead on new initiatives is very limited. More time would be excellent or a specialist TA or Teacher to deliver the sessions.*

» *We also cannot ignore financing as a factor which restricts our ability to employ [staff].*

» *We want a syllabus including lesson plans please with associated resources not more guidance on producing Schemes of Work.*

» *We would not need a foreign language assistant full time - however - were there one available to share between schools - we would certainly wish to have one. Just because we happen to have 2 teachers who speak French here - they could easily move to another school and then we'd have nobody here.*

These findings accord with those of the 2016 survey in which respondents expressed a need for additional funding and expertise if MFL were to be introduced into primary schools. They were echoed again in final comments:

» *Staff lack confidence and experience regarding expectations, resources and international language(s) plans, therefore the whole school would benefit from all possible support and assistance.*

» *I think that the new curriculum will really broaden the opportunities for learners to be immersed in more than English and Welsh. As a school we are however concerned about the staff training and timetabling implications.*

Others cited barriers such as the full curriculum and the need to prioritise English, Welsh and support for pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL):

» *Staff have expressed concerns about the available time for teaching other languages – it is already a great challenge for us to deliver all aspects of the current curriculum in the time available to us.*

» *Our parents already complain about the amount of time we spend teaching Welsh and see another language as just another pressure on the children and a distraction from learning English.*

» *I think it is important in order to broaden horizons. Where I struggle is with the very real deprivation within my context and the need to instil English language capabilities with children who come into school with no language – would introduction of an MFL bring confusion to this process?*

There is also a perception that international languages are in competition with Welsh for scarce resources, as these two contrasting comments demonstrate:

» *In principle, I think it is a good idea. In practice, I worry that we do not have the specialism and know how much money has been ploughed in the teaching of Welsh over the last 20+ years and many teachers are still not confident in teaching another language.*

» *I think that trying to justify the promotion of international languages in the wake of all the cuts to Welsh language resources and provision is very difficult.*

Primary schools want the introduction of international languages to be successful, but are aware of the resource implications and the importance of secondary schools being able to build on their work:

» *Truly like the idea, but the primary curriculum is overloaded, and expectations are very high. High schools aren't 'running' with our good work in the core subjects, which makes me think that they'll simply ignore the fact that we have made good progress with an MFL and start from scratch again. Also, pupils from all primary feeder schools would need to have reached the same standard if the High school is truly going to build on our good work. Primary schools just don't have time for tokenism - either we do it properly, together, or not bother.*

» *We have made huge progress in terms of delivering international languages in the last few years. However, due to the budget cuts for next academic year, we are unable to allow any teachers to attend language training next year. Our staff are not linguists and are not very confident in delivering languages. They have started this in the classroom, but continued training is vital for the delivery of international languages in primary schools to be a success.*



FINDINGS FROM THE SECONDARY SURVEYS

WHICH LANGUAGES ARE BEING TAUGHT?

We asked teachers to report which languages are taught at the different key stages in order to provide a more comprehensive picture than that offered by exam figures alone.

French is taught in twice as many schools as Spanish and more than four times as many as German. However, while fewer schools teach French at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3, for Spanish the reverse is the case, with 39% offering Spanish at Key Stage 4 and 30% in Key Stage 3. (The smaller proportions of schools offering the different languages post-16 is because many schools in the survey do not cater for pupils of this age.) The situation for languages post-16 is discussed further on page 26.

A third of schools (38) reported offering one or more languages as extra-curricular options - most commonly Mandarin - offered by 10 schools in the survey.

More than half the schools (58%) said that their pupils can sit exams in their home languages such as Polish, Italian and Portuguese. These entries are reflected in the exam figures reported in section 3. In all but one case, schools reported that they facilitate this.

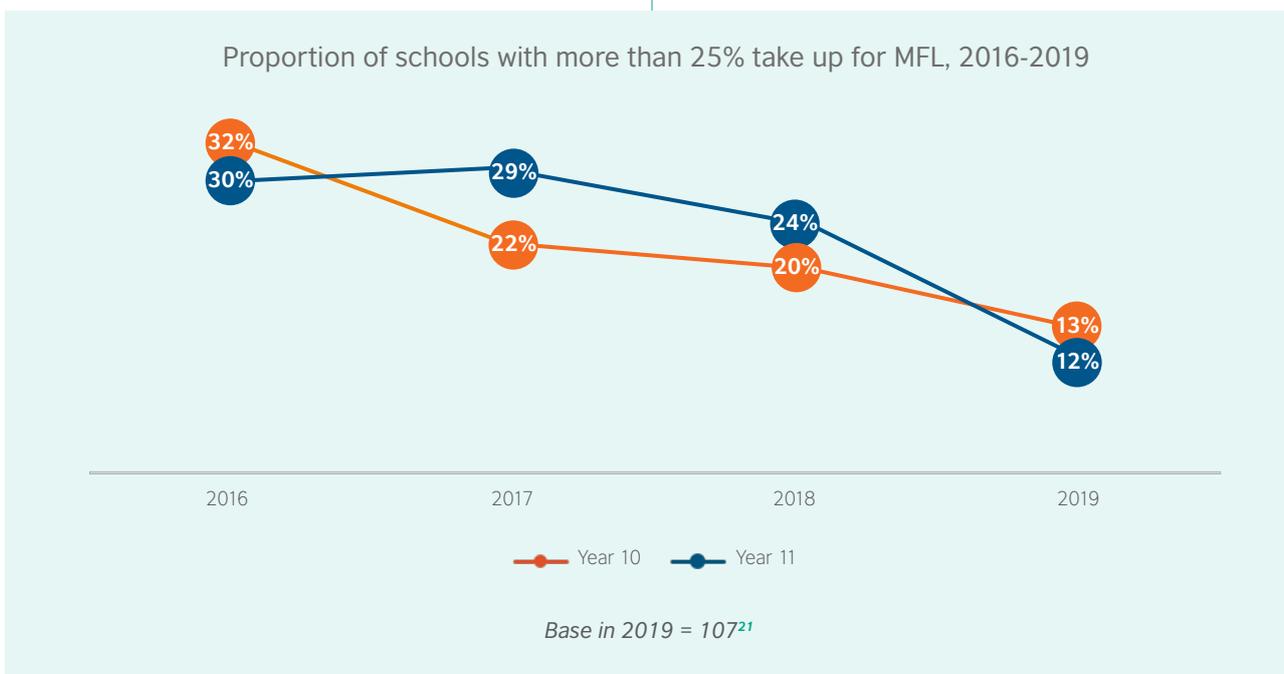
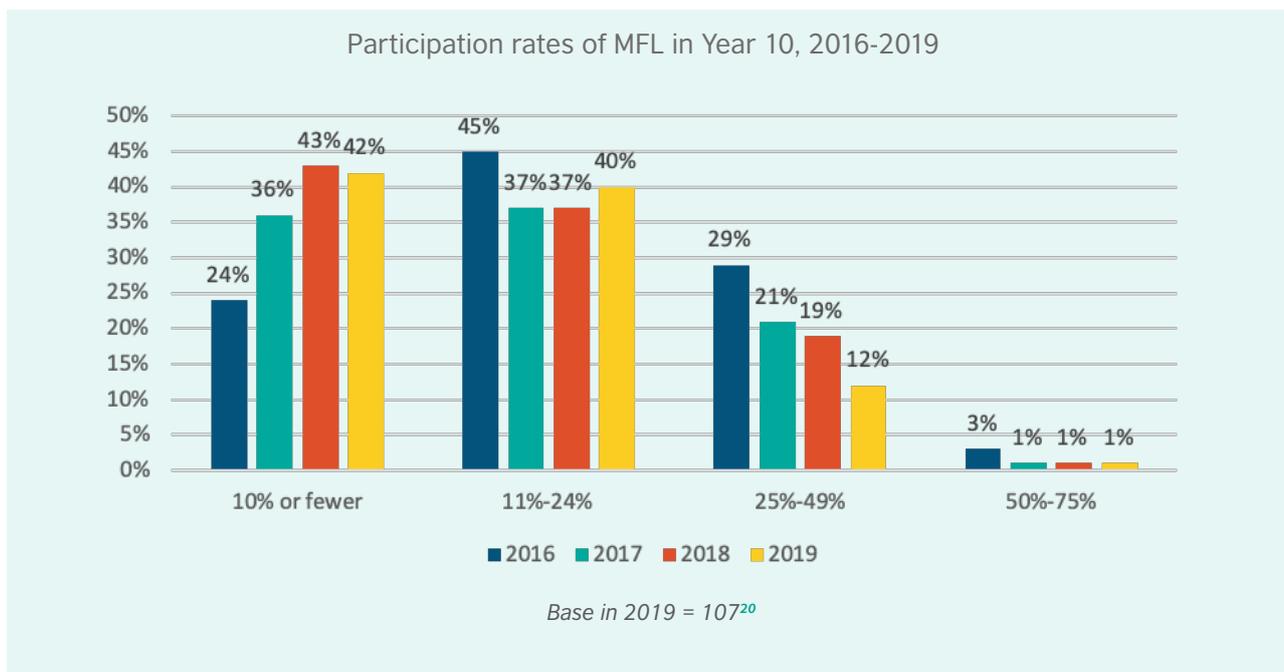
	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4	Post-16	Any level
French	88%	83%	32%	90%
German	18%	18%	7%	20%
Spanish	30%	39%	16%	44%
Other	5%	4%	2%	7%

Proportions of responding secondary schools teaching various languages at different key stages (Base = 114)

Number of schools offering languages as extra-curricular options at any level



Base = 114



TAKE UP IN KEY STAGE 4

Responses from schools indicate a continuing trend towards lower take-up for MFL in both Year 10 and Year 11. The chart above shows the evolution of participation rates in Year 10 over the past 4 years. A very similar situation pertains in Year 11.

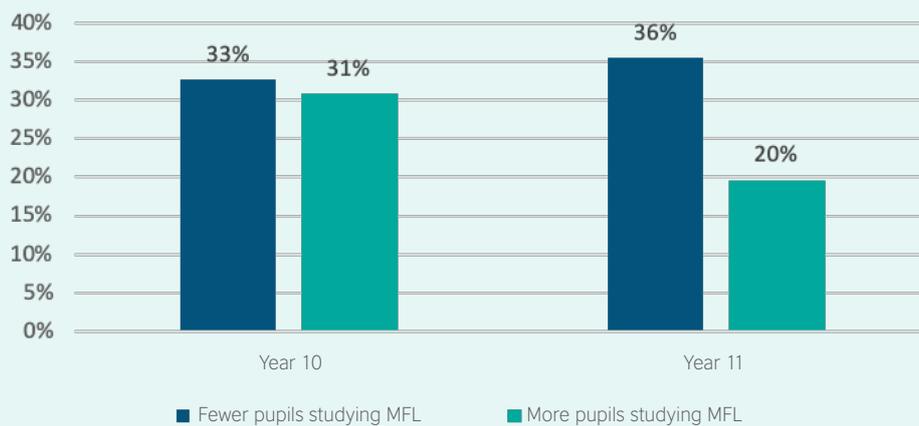
There were no schools in any year of the survey where more than 75% of the cohort were taking MFL in either Year 10 or Year 11, compared to 30% of schools in Northern Ireland and 27% of schools in England.²²

²⁰ Base respondents in other years were 2016: 124; 2017: 118; 2018: 135.

²¹ See note above for base respondents in other years.

²² 30% of post-primary schools responding to *Language Trends Northern Ireland* (British Council Northern Ireland, 2019, p. 25) had more than 75% of pupils taking a language to GCSE. In England the figure (state schools only) is 27% (British Council, *Language Trends 2019, Language Teaching in Primary and Secondary Schools in England*, 2019, p. 12).

How the proportion of pupils studying MFL compares to last year



Base = 107

The most significant falls have been in the proportion of schools managing to attract at least a quarter of the cohort into the subject. While just three years ago, nearly a third of schools were able to recruit these numbers, now only 12%-13% do so.

When asked how these proportions compare to the previous year, 36% said that they have fewer pupils studying MFL in Year 11 than last year and a third of schools (33%) report that they have fewer pupils doing so in Year 10. However, here the proportion of schools is almost balanced by the 31% saying that they have more pupils taking a language than last year, which may provide some hope that the decline in numbers taking GCSE could be less severe in 2020 than it has been in 2019.

Three quarters of the respondents who had fewer pupils than the previous year in either Year 10 or Year 11 said the reason for this was a limited number of option slots, linked to the Welsh Baccalaureate and compulsory Welsh:

- » *Pupils are now regarding Welsh as their language option.*
- » *Prior to the introduction of compulsory Welsh, we had 2 classes of 20+. Pupils now see French as of lesser importance than Welsh, although they say that if they had the option to choose one language or another, they would prefer to take the foreign language.*

Linked to this, about half of respondents from schools where numbers are in decline attributed this to the difficulty of MFL in general, and the new GCSE in particular, compared to other subjects²³:

- » *Perception that MFL at GCSE is too hard. 'Rumours' that the new spec is too difficult spreading down.*
- » *The new GCSE course is very challenging.*

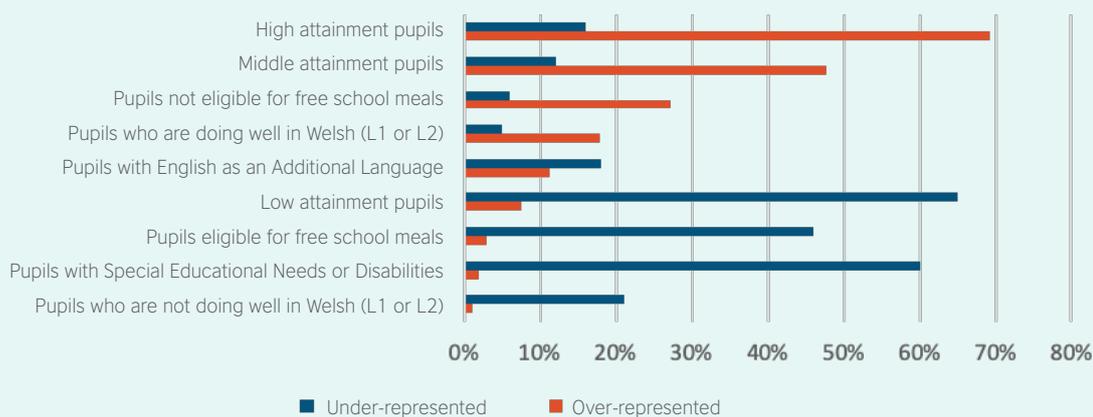
Other reasons given were that there were not enough students to make the course viable, less teaching time in Key Stage 3, and schools bringing option choices forward to Year 8:

- » *The decline in Year 10 is symptomatic this cohort being the first year-group to have chosen their options at the end of Year 8. We have had an average of 50% take up at GCSE for MFL over a long period of time, more than seven years, but the introduction of earlier options for the current Year 10 had a negative impact, we feel due to the lack of exposure to Routes into Language Cymru and experience of language careers talks traditionally organised in Year 9.*

Schools where numbers had increased cited internal changes such as timetabling and changes to option columns which had led to higher take-up:

- » *'Setting' in KS3 has enabled us to extend MAT [More Able and Talented] pupils.*

Pupils most likely to be over- and under-represented in GCSE MFL classes



Base = 107

» *More KS3 lessons, so more confidence in the subject.*

The contribution of external agencies including Global Futures, Routes Cymru, universities and business speakers was also acknowledged:

» *Global Futures activities to promote languages have been useful and have encouraged pupils to continue with MFL.*

» *Pupils enjoy learning Spanish and with extra-curricular speakers' input they see the value of studying MFL.*

GCSE PUPIL PROFILES

Schools were asked which pupils were more likely or less likely to be taking a modern foreign language for GCSE. Their responses show that the make-up of GCSE language classes is stratified along both academic and socio-economic lines: high and middle-attaining pupils are over-represented in MFL classes in most schools and low attainment pupils under-represented.

Pupils eligible for Free School Meals are under-represented in 46% of schools, whereas pupils not eligible for Free School Meals (i.e. from more affluent family backgrounds) are over-represented in 27% of schools.

Also, where pupils are doing well in Welsh, they are more likely to be over-represented in MFL GCSE classes; while pupils with English as an Additional Language are more likely to be under-represented. Pupils with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities are under-represented in 60% of schools.



23 The difficulty of GCSE is also echoed by schools in England (British Council, *Language Trends 2019, Language Teaching in Primary and Secondary Schools in England*, 2019, p. 16).

ACCREDITATION

Schools were asked what accreditation they offered for languages and asked to comment on how suitable this was. 30% of all comments related to the unsuitability of the new GCSE for some or all students and the impact it has had on take-up:

- » *GCSE is becoming increasingly unsuitable for middle-low ability pupils. Recent listening and reading examinations show that parts of it were even inaccessible for the most able.*
- » *The new GCSE is not accessible to weaker pupils. This year's papers were exceptionally difficult and have already reduced our prospective numbers at A-Level due to pupils being despondent at such a negative experience.*
- » *We like the new GCSE because the pupils are able to speak the language at the end of the course, but it is very hard for the lower ability children - even at foundation level.*

Comments related to the amount of content to be covered as well as to the difficulty of the tasks to be completed:

- » *As a department we feel that the new GCSE specification has too much content, the speaking exam in particular has too many elements. It does not make our subject appealing.*
- » *New GCSE is much better, but there is too much content. As a result, it is difficult to complete the course and establish a good grounding in grammar.*

These comments were also reflected in comments relating to AS/A-level:

- » *[...] not much better than the old course. But the AS course is far too heavy leaving less to be completed for A-level. As a result, there is a danger that some pupils will not continue with MFL to A-level.*
- » *GCSE/A-Level are perceived as very difficult as there is no coursework and so many topics to learn. They seem to learn a lot off by heart (vocabulary, grammar etc) which they don't seem to have to do in other subjects.*

Seven schools offered Global Business Communication (Levels 1 and 2). They felt that these qualifications were suitable but, with low take-up for MFL it was difficult to fill courses:

- » *[...] unfortunately, there wasn't enough interest for either of them to run for the next 2 years.*

Other schools expressed interest in offering Global Business Communication, but echoed the concern about possible take-up:

- » *We did look at the Global Business Communication course and discussed offering this as an alternative to GCSE in the hope that we could get 2 courses running but there wasn't enough uptake to justify 2 courses and our SLT were not prepared to offer the business course instead of GCSE.*
- » *We will be looking at Global Business Communication next year as a possible alternative to GCSE. However, due to small uptake, it is difficult to offer both qualifications.*
- » *We are looking into Global Business but are worried that it will not provide our pupils with suitable qualifications to attend university.*
- » *Global Business Communication is not seen as relevant for students' career development.*

Other MFL qualifications offered by schools included QCF language qualifications (2 schools), IGCSE (1 school), and the HSK qualifications in Chinese (2 schools) but no comments were left about any of these.

ENGAGEMENT WITH GLOBAL FUTURES

88% of schools reported some level of engagement with the Welsh Government's Global Futures initiative through activities organised by their Regional Consortium/Centre of Excellence and its partners (e.g. language institutes, universities). This is a very similar proportion to last year (87%).

The majority (58%) of schools think that Global Futures has improved the situation for MFL although just over half qualified this ('somewhat'). 42% said that 'very little' or 'no' improvement as a result.

However, there was overwhelming demand (95%) for continued support to be provided for MFL along the lines of what is provided through Global Futures and, before that, CILT Cymru. Many comments in response to this question related to the wider context and the need for further support and promotion of MFL:

- » *A lot more promotion of the value of learning MFL and the benefit to the economy is needed. MFL is still below the radar and is not regarded as a valuable area of study.*

- » *The uptake of MFL's is declining and many schools are losing a language (German in particular). We need as much support as possible to ensure that MFL's are promoted.*
- » *Even more help required now with Brexit and possible negative attitudes towards languages.*

Respondents stated that the impact of Global Futures had been compromised by other factors such as lack of funding and the exam system:

- » *Global Futures has given a lot of support to departments, but ultimately, if the exam is too difficult, the pupils are not interested.*
- » *This is a wider issue - without government, educational establishments, business and headteachers emphasising the importance of MFL specifically (not just bilingualism) we have no hope of tackling the widespread reluctance to take a difficult GCSE, which requires 4 separate exams, preparation of 18 topics and an extensive grammar knowledge.*
- » *Schools are usually very keen to engage but unfortunately not all are well supported by senior leadership and shrinking budgets and pressures often mean that cover is often not available for MFL teachers to participate or attend events [...] They also crave networking and network meetings are very valuable CPD but unfortunately it has proved almost impossible to coordinate meetings this year.*

Others echoed this in calls for additional measures:

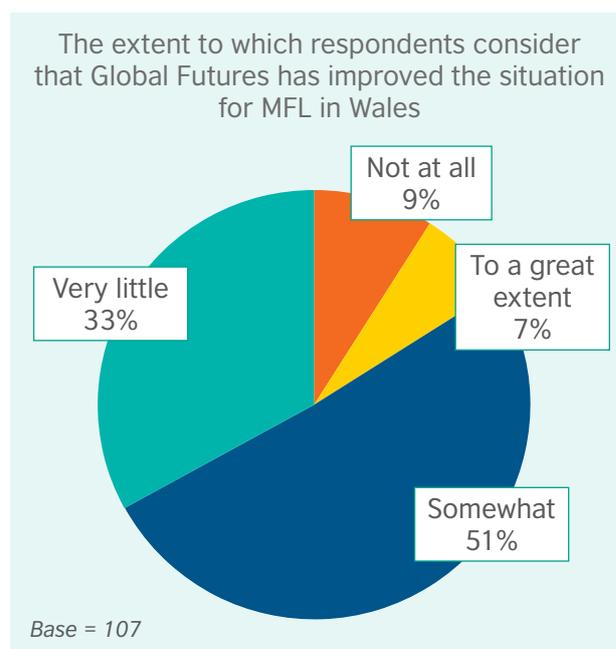
- » *MFL needs to be seen as an important subject by SLT and county especially in today's political climate. More needs to be done to tackle the image of it being too difficult plus the content of GCSE exams particularly at foundation level.*
- » *[...] the situation is becoming dire. Talented pupils in the past would opt for French but no more – they go for the easy option. Our school is not actively promoting languages despite my efforts and since our [regional consortium] lead has left there has been little direction, support or development of resources.*
- » *SLT need to be told formally that they must support MFL. With the new Curriculum it is vital that languages are given the same curriculum time as English and Welsh.*

- » *It is not only at the classroom teacher level that we need to be working. If real change is going to be set, we need to fund language learning, so that schools get more money for more pupils learning MFL, heads will then encourage it more in schools.*

There was also praise for the work of Global Futures and before that, CILT Cymru:

- » *We need the agencies to continue to provide opportunities for students to get exciting experiences in language learning and the funding from Welsh government to support staff professional development and networking, meeting in teach-meets regularly.*
- » *Even with Global Futures support and the increase in profile and support offered to MFL there is still a decline in numbers. The good work that has been started needs to be continued to help us grow from strength to strength to try to halt the decline in take up of languages.*
- » *I really miss the support that we used to have from CILT Cymru, where the advisors got to know individual schools and the teachers very well and could suggest ideas suited to the school.*

This respondent commented further that support from higher education or coordinated by high-performing schools was often insensitive to the difficulties faced by 11-16 schools in deprived areas.



PROSPECTS FOR MFL IN THE NEW CURRICULUM

While 22% of schools are optimistic about this, almost half think it unlikely that the new curriculum for Wales will improve the situation for MFL.

Schools which are most sceptical about prospects for MFL in the new curriculum (those replying 'not at all likely') are statistically more likely to have lower levels of pupils eligible for Free School Meals.

Schools felt that although the new curriculum had potential, it would be difficult to realise this, given the lower status of MFL compared to English and Welsh, combined with less curriculum time and what they saw as harder exams:

» *MFL comes a very clear 3rd after English and Welsh - treated once again like a poor relation with dwindling resources, very few schools offering more than 1 MFL per year group, less and less curriculum time and still, one of the most difficult GCSEs (and A-Levels) to tackle.*

» *We are already a pioneer school and have been for 3 years for the new curriculum. We are seeing a decrease in language uptake for next year.*

» *Never enough curriculum time. No understanding of how to link the three types of language learning and teaching, only ever involves Welsh and English teachers so no understanding of how MFL links. They think they know but they don't.*

Some respondents felt that MFL could be lost or taught by non-specialists and there were calls for accountability for MFL to be built into the system:

» *Once schools are measured on their MFL performance, or uptake, like core subjects, then we will see an improvement, and sadly not before.*

» *MFL needs to be made STATUTORY for this to succeed.*

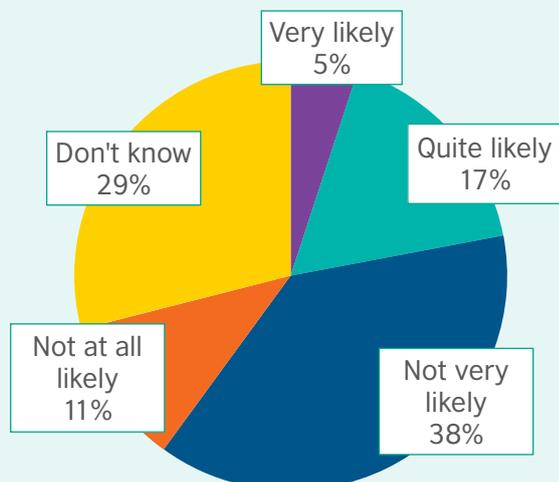
PREPARATION FOR THE NEW CURRICULUM

Nearly a quarter (23%) of MFL departments have already made some changes in preparation for the new curriculum, and a smaller proportion (14%) have some plans which will be put in place later. A further 31% have been involved in discussions though without any firm plans at this stage and a similar proportion (32%) have not been involved in any preparations yet.

Forty teachers left further details of changes in hand or being planned. The most common types of preparation included closer or joint work with the English and/or Welsh departments (35%) and making broader cross-curricula links across the school for project work or links to the Digital or Literacy and Numeracy Frameworks (30%):

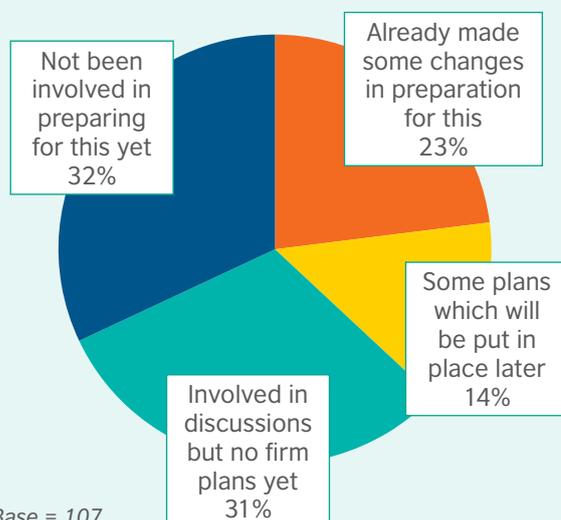
» *We have been working closely with Cymraeg on improvements in pedagogy. We have also been looking at how we can better support the Digital Competence Framework/Literacy and Numeracy Framework.*

In your opinion, how likely is it that the new curriculum for Wales, with international languages part of the Languages, Literacy and Communication Area of Learning and Experience, will improve the situation for MFL in Wales?



Base = 107

To what extent has your MFL department so far been involved in preparing for the new curriculum



Base = 107

» *DCF [Digital Competence Framework] tasks, planning with Welsh department to teach grammar in a similar way, Numeracy and Literacy tasks.*

Some schools were able to describe in greater detail the sorts of activities which these links had given rise to:

» *Triad lessons planned and taught by English/Welsh and MFL teachers as trials once a year*

» *Focus on translanguaging skills, grammar knowledge, syntax, etc as well as moving away from “traditional” topics*

» *Where we have planned for this year’s Scheme of Work, we have tried to include the 4 purposes where appropriate. Year 7 are following a 3 languages Scheme of Work to become ambitious learners; Year 8 are to develop a project with the new curriculum in mind. Year 9 already do a project focusing on digital, numerical competencies.*

» *Sustainability/oceans project in Year 7 and 8 in three languages. More culturally based activities. Finding out about the languages. Looking at languages internationally. Focus on Africa, environmental initiatives in North Friesland. Making comparisons. Use of creativity. Comic strips in French with storyboardthat.com, authentic reading resources, international learning about celebrations and festivals.*

PERSPECTIVES ON MFL DEVELOPMENT IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Around 40% of secondary schools report that at least one of their feeder primary schools is providing some form of teaching in international languages. This is an increase on 2018 when 31% of secondary schools reported ‘some exposure to the new language’ from their feeder schools. This supports evidence from the primary survey (see p.13) that more Welsh primary schools are starting to incorporate some element of international languages into their curricula.

Forty-two schools provided further information about the teaching of international languages in their feeder primary schools. A third (14) reported direct involvement in this, for example:

» *We are running a primary MFL transition scheme for the first time this year. We hope to develop this further (Welsh medium).*

» *Japanese taught by me.*

» *One of our MFL teachers teaches 1 hour a week on a rotational basis at our feeder schools.*

All-through schools were in a particularly advantageous position, both for planning and delivery: three in our sample left comments similar to this:

» *We are a 3-16 school, so our pupils have Spanish lessons from nursery.*

More than a third of schools (16) left comments referring to limitations in provision, because it consists only in a very brief or rudimentary exposure, such as a voluntary ‘club,’ which sometimes has to be paid for by parents, or because it involves only one or two of a large number of feeder schools:

» *Some schools provide some exposure to languages within each topic, but this is in short bursts.*

» *One or two only - we have over 10 feeder schools. Very limited knowledge gained; not organised as part of a timetable. Primary schools are doing what they can with very few resources.*

» *There are some clubs and one-offs offered by us.*

However, there was also evidence of promising new activity, projects and pilot schemes being introduced:

» *Two schools in our catchment area are working with staff from [school] to develop a more independent model of delivery: secondary staff are training primary.*

» *As a Centre of Excellence school, we have worked hard to develop a primary project with all 8 cluster primary schools.*

» *We have piloted the Power Language Platform with our primary schools. We did a pilot for one year and have subscribed to the resources for one year as well. Teachers have access to 20 responsive dossiers as well as the planners. All teaching resources and sound files are provided.*

» *Every primary school in our catchment area has Spanish/French lesson every week.*

46% of secondary schools report having contacts with their feeder primaries in relation to MFL/ international languages. This proportion is very slightly lower than in previous years (48% in 2018 and 2016, 49% in 2017). The most common form of contact is outreach teaching. A wide variety of types of collaboration is reported, although by small number of schools.

Does your school collaborate in any way with your feeder primary schools over the teaching of international languages?

Types of collaboration	Number of schools
We exchange information informally to assist the transition to Key Stage 3	7
We go into one or more schools to provide outreach teaching for primary children	21
We send our pupils into primary schools to provide an introduction to international languages	6
We provide training for primary teachers	6
We take part in joint training/networking activities with primary teachers	3
We collaborate with one or more primary schools in planning units of work	1
We collaborate in other ways	31
No contacts with feeder primary schools over international languages	58 (54%)

Base = 107, multiple responses permitted

Other forms of collaboration included:

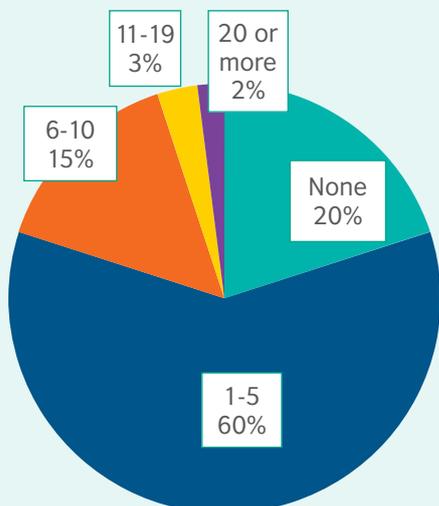
- » *Pupils from our feeder [primaries] come to us and have a taster session in MFL*
- » *We arrange a Language Festival for the primary schools. External agencies are part of the arrangement and FML teachers from Secondary provide some lessons.*
- » *ERW project involving Spanish and Expressive Arts²⁴, involving [name of school] PLA's [Pupil Language Ambassadors] (Year 8s) and MAT [More Able and Talented] Year 5 and 6 pupils in feeder primary schools.*

POST-16 PROVISION

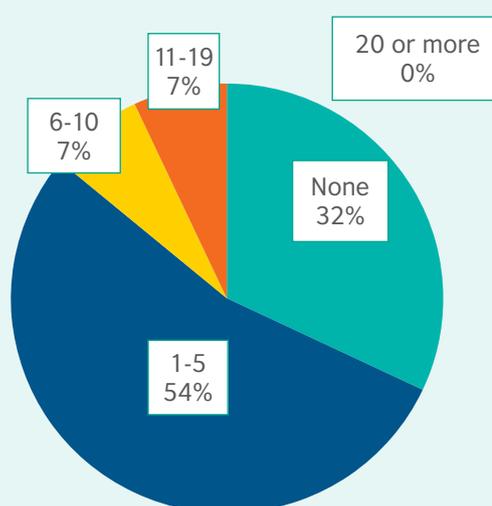
Just under two thirds (63%) of responding secondary schools have post-16 pupils. Of these, 90% offer AS and/or A2 courses in MFL, with a quarter of these doing so through collaborative arrangements with other schools. However, 39% of schools have either no take-up or no provision for MFL.

This year's figures confirm a picture of low and declining take-up for languages Post-16. Course viability is a significant issue. 28% of schools in which students can take post-16 courses in languages have none doing so.

How many pupils from your school are currently studying A-Level in MFL? 2017



How many pupils from your school are currently studying A-Level in MFL? 2019



Base in 2019 = 60²⁵

Where courses do run, the vast majority do so with very small numbers: there were only eight schools in our survey (12% of those with Post-16 pupils) where more than 5 pupils were taking A2 and only 12 (18%) where more than 5 were taking AS.

Respondents comment:

» *Due to decrease in numbers and lack of funding, for the first time, AS Spanish did not run last year and from September, there will be no AS Spanish or French, neither will there be A2 Spanish. It will also be the first time that French A-Level has not run. Also, we are the only school in the collaboration that offers languages at A-Level, so we are exceptionally disappointed.*

» *It is becoming increasingly difficult to ensure that MFL are available as post 16 courses as the senior management team have set a minimum requirement of 6 pupils for every subject.*

The graphic below (for A-Level) highlights the vulnerability of MFL Post-16 given the very high proportion of schools (87%) where take-up is non-existent or below that generally regarded as viable.

Comparing the 2019 figures for Post-16 take-up with those of the previous two years (see chart above), it is evident that the proportion of schools with very low or no take-up has increased, while the proportion with more viable numbers (6 or more) has declined.

A similar picture emerges for AS (not shown). Where just 2 years ago, 31% of schools catered for 6 or more MFL students, just 20% do so today, and the proportion of schools with no take-up has risen from 26% to 32%.

Half of schools with Post-16 MFL students say that numbers have declined over the last 3 years. However, this is a smaller proportion than in 2018, when 65% reported declines. In 2019, 17% reported that numbers have increased, compared to just 6% in 2018. This may indicate that the pace of the decline is slowing, although the downward trend is still critically steep.

Schools cited an interrelated mix of reasons for declining numbers post-16 summarised in the following comments:

» *Historically, AS and A2 in MFL seen as hard choices: too many of our pupils are aiming at the very best universities and will not take up subjects where A or B is not almost automatic. Last year's new spec GCSE seen as hard - many pupils too scared that they will not cope.*

» *Falling GCSE numbers result in smaller sixth form classes. The course is seen as difficult.*

» *We lose a lot of our pupils to STEM²⁶ subjects, MFL is often their reserve choice. But they can't see a skills link between MFL and a range of jobs. Perhaps the vision isn't clear enough like with science and medicine etc.*

» *Decrease is due partly to difficultly perception and the reduction of teaching hours over past two years. Also, a clash with AS Mathematics has affected numbers. We are fearful that advanced level languages will disappear especially as there is a suggestion of AS and A2 shared groups for next year. Incompatible courses so we are being asked to deliver the impossible. Standards will decline.*

» *Small classes are no longer allowed to run.*

Where numbers have increased Post-16, respondents say this is a result of year-to-year fluctuations, 'luck', or being the lead school for the subject in a consortium:

» *Down to luck - the pupils who enjoy languages happened to be in these year groups.*

» *Due to us being a sixth form centre of excellence and the only sixth form our consortium pupils can attend.*

One respondent where the school had managed to stimulate a record level of interest for 2019 as a result of 'previous good results and proactive strategies within department', complained that this year's GCSE exams had been so off-putting to pupils that she expected many to change their minds:

» *This will not manifest due to the bad experience in the WJEC Listening and Reading papers. Teachers feel betrayed by the WJEC. Despite all our hard work, they can undo this by pitching the level of difficulty such that the questions are inaccessible to all but a select few.*

24 **Cerdd Iaith/Listening to Language** is a creative learning project which has been integrating music and language learning in primary schools in South and West Wales. Partners include British Council Wales, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, Yr Athrofa- the Institute of Education, and Ein Rhanbarth ar Waith (ERW)

25 Base numbers of responding schools offering post-16 courses in MFL in other years were 2016: 69; 2017: 66; 2018: 65.

26 Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths.

Which of the following, if any, do you see as challenges to providing a high-quality experience of learning MFL for pupils in your school?



Base = 106, multiple responses permitted

MAIN CHALLENGES FACED BY SCHOOLS

Respondents were provided with a checklist of issues previously identified as likely challenges to providing a high-quality language learning experience for pupils at all levels and were asked to indicate which of these were challenges in their school.

The nature and content of external exams emerged as the most widespread challenge for 73% of schools, followed by insufficient curriculum time and the timetabling of options in Key Stage 4. These three challenges were all identified as issues in more than two-thirds of responding schools.

The way that exams are marked and graded was identified as significant by 42% of schools, a much lower figure than the proportions in England and Northern Ireland who identified ‘severe grading’ and related issues as a key challenge.²⁷

Staffing issues, including access to CPD, appear to be among the least critical challenges experienced by respondents in Wales, while the implications of Brexit are challenging for a large minority of respondents (41%).

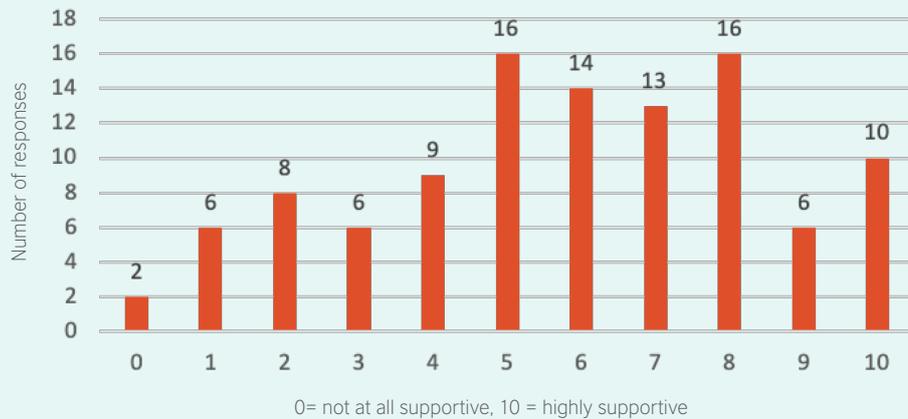
A range of other challenges were identified including the focus on core subjects, compulsory full course Welsh at GCSE, reductions in teaching hours, lack of specialist teachers, mixed ability teaching at GCSE, options choices being made a year early, and ‘parental, social and cultural influences’:

» *General disregard for languages nationally and pupils ‘opting’ out before they even make their options.*

IMPACT OF BREXIT

In response to a further specific question on the impact of Brexit, 30% of schools reported that pupils are less motivated to study MFL, while none reported increased motivation as a result of the Brexit process. Around a third (34%) said that pupils’ responses had been mixed, while 45% said they had not noticed any impact on students’ motivation to study languages.

To what extent do you feel MFL is supported by senior management in your school?



Base = 106

ATTITUDES OF SENIOR SCHOOL LEADERS TOWARDS MFL

Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which the senior leadership team in their school is supportive of MFL. The results show positive but not overwhelmingly supporting attitude towards MFL with about a third of responses in the range 8-10, indicating a relatively high degree of support for MFL from senior school leaders. However, the mean was only 5.8.

In relation to this, respondents commented:

» *There is a huge amount of praise lavished on the faculty and we do a great amount to promote languages and organise lots of activities and events. There is a feeling that languages are important, and I have been assured that will be safeguarded, but for how much longer if numbers are in decline?*

» *We are hugely supported but there is only so much they can do in the current financial climate with decreasing numbers opting.*

» *Very little understanding as to the nature of the subject in SLT; often unsympathetic to our demands for curriculum time; SLT do not spend time in the department; very rarely speak to students about their own MFL experiences; will support us, if we ask continuously but this is with reluctance and is not sustained. All MFL teachers have experienced reduction in hours, following the start of compulsory redundancy proceedings.*

Respondents also used the space to add further comments, mainly to emphasise points already made about the impact of funding constraints, the difficulty of exams and concerns about declining numbers. Comments highlighting new issues included one about German and another about girls and STEM:

» *We have lost German GCSE as of September 2019 for the first time in the history of the school. There is a small but skilled pool of German teachers in Wales who cannot be replaced in the future if the Government suddenly realises that German is a language of European trade.*

» *In particular at A-level amongst girls where there is an emphasis on STEM subjects, which results in many pupils studying those subjects rather than languages, especially pupils who have achieved A/A* at GCSE (Wels).*

Finally, an aspirational comment with a vision of a more positive future for multilingualism in Wales:

» *I would like to see MFL skills and other languages being used around the whole school and opportunities outside the classroom for pupils to practise/use MFL.*

27 *Language Trends 2019 (England)*, p.16 and *Language Trends Northern Ireland*, p. 28.

CONCLUSIONS AND KEY FINDINGS

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Evidence from both primary and secondary schools suggests that there is expanding interest in languages beyond Welsh and English in the primary sector, with new approaches being trialled, albeit still amongst a minority of schools. This will provide an important evidence base for future development, as well as building the expertise which will be needed if international languages are to become established within the new curriculum area of Languages, Literacy and Communication.

Welsh-medium schools, which are teaching international languages in greater proportions than other types of school, show that Welsh and international languages do not have to compete, but rather that bilingualism can be supportive of multilingualism.

Primary schools are keenly aware of their needs for training and support and look to outside agencies to supply the expertise they lack. A dependency on outside specialists entails a risk of international languages being developed along a separate path from core English and Welsh teaching rather than being integrated in the way envisaged in the new curriculum. However, for many schools this may be the most practical way forward.

There is a very strong appetite for further support for the development of international languages, both in amount and in extent. A very large proportion of those schools which have already taken part in some activities offered through Global Futures would welcome being able to participate more actively in language training, developmental initiatives, partnerships and networking, whilst at the same time there are very many primary schools – nearly half, according to our survey – who report that they have not yet been offered any support. Schools also stress the need for some form of financial support for developing international languages and require language training for existing staff.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The introduction of new GCSE and AS/A-Level exams, widely considered to be much harder both in content and as a result of the number of tasks candidates are required to complete, has become a further disincentive for pupils to devote one of their few free option choices to MFL.

The trend of declining take-up at GCSE is continuing and there is a widening gap in the make-up of MFL GCSE classes along both academic and socio-economic lines: pupils who are eligible for Free School Meals, who are lower attaining or who have Special Educational Needs or Disabilities, are all less likely to be taking a language.

Difficult exams and disappointing results at GCSE are also taking their toll on take-up for MFL Post-16, which has been critically low for some years and is still declining. The vast majority of Post-16 MFL courses run with tiny numbers below the level of financial viability, making them extremely vulnerable to cost-cutting measures in the face of financial pressures on schools.

There have been increases in numbers for GCSE MFL in some schools thanks to committed teachers and the support of Global Futures, especially the work of its partners, which is gratefully acknowledged. There is scope for enabling many more schools to have access to this type of support: respondents were virtually unanimous in calling for further support and promotion of MFL.

However, the impact of such measures has been mitigated by other factors and is not sufficiently generalised to make an impression on the national picture, other than perhaps a slight slowing of the rate of decline. Schools report that efforts to increase take-up have been constrained by the small number of option choices, competition with other subjects and pupils' reluctance to take on a subject known to be difficult.

MFL AND WELSH

This year's survey highlights the complexity of putting into place Wales's ambition to be 'bilingual plus one'. On the one hand, Welsh medium primary schools are embracing international languages at a faster pace than their English-medium counterparts. On the other, efforts to promote Welsh in secondary schools have come at the expense of MFL: responses confirm a connection between the decline in MFL entries over the past five years and the increase in entries for Welsh Second Language, now only available as a full course.

There is evidence that preparing for the new curriculum has already stimulated closer working between MFL and English and Welsh departments and some promising new approaches in a minority of schools. However, respondents are not optimistic about the prospects for MFL in the new curriculum in a context where English and Welsh are at the forefront of head teachers' concerns.

The overall conclusion of this year's report must therefore be that the severity of the decline in secondary schools, combined with the need to develop a new subject at primary level, require incentives and support beyond the current scale and scope of Global Futures.



APPENDIX: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESPONSE PROFILES

The questionnaires were developed in early 2019 by the researchers in consultation with British Council Wales as the commissioning organisation and stakeholder representatives including Estyn and the University of Cardiff/Routes into Languages Cymru. Consultations were also held with the Welsh Government and with Arad Research, authors of a complementary report on international languages in Welsh primary schools. The survey questions were uploaded bilingually on to the online survey platform Survey Monkey and trialled in March 2019. Invitations to complete the survey were sent to the head teachers of all primary schools in Wales to all secondary schools, addressed to the Head of MFL. Responses were gathered between March and May 2019.

Primary Schools (WALES)

Response Rate

	Base	Response	Response Rate
Primary	1239	155	12.5%

Response Profile

Age Range	Base raw	Base %	Response raw	Response %
Middle Schools (ages 3 - 16)	5	0.4%	0	0.0%
Middle Schools (ages 3 - 19)	7	0.6%	1	0.6%
Middle Schools (ages 4 - 19)	1	0.1%	1	0.6%
Primary (infant and junior)	196	15.8%	22	14.2%
Primary (junior school)	18	1.5%	0	0.0%
Primary (nursery, infant and junior)	1002	80.9%	129	83.2%
No data	10	0.8%	2	1.3%

Education consortia	Base raw	Base %	Response raw	Response %
North Wales	342	27.6%	35	22.6%
South West and Mid Wales	405	32.7%	52	33.5%
Central South Wales	306	24.7%	41	26.5%
South East Wales	186	15.0%	27	17.4%

School Governance Type	Base raw	Base %	Response raw	Response %
Community School	1017	82.1%	126	81.3%
Voluntary Aided School	131	10.6%	15	9.7%
Voluntary Controlled School	77	6.2%	12	7.7%
Foundation School	4	0.3%	0	0.0%
Not data	10	0.8%	2	1.3%

Language	Base raw	Base %	Response raw	Response %
Welsh Medium - Welsh	369	29.8%	41	26.5%
Welsh Medium - Bilingual (Type A)	3	0.2%	1	0.6%
Welsh Medium - Bilingual (Type B)	2	0.2%	0	0.0%
Welsh Medium - Bilingual (Type C)	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
English Medium - English Medium	797	64.3%	103	66.5%
English Medium - English with significant Welsh	32	2.6%	1	0.6%
Transitional	4	0.3%	0	0.0%
Dual stream	32	2.6%	9	5.8%

Free School Meal Eligibility Quintile	Base raw	Base %	Response raw	Response %
High	241	19.5%	25	16.1%
Middle-High	239	19.3%	30	19.4%
Middle	239	19.3%	30	19.4%
Middle-Low	245	19.8%	27	17.4%
Low	245	19.8%	37	23.9%
No data	30	2.4%	6	3.9%

Secondary State Schools (WALES)

Response Rate

	Base	Response	Response Rate
Secondary	207	114	55.1%

Response Profile

Age Range	Base raw	Base %	Response raw	Response %
Middle Schools (ages 3 - 16)	5	2.4%	4	3.5%
Middle Schools (ages 3 - 19)	7	3.4%	5	4.4%
Middle Schools (ages 4 - 19)	1	0.5%	0	0.0%
Secondary (ages 11 - 16)	54	26.1%	31	27.2%
Secondary (ages 11 - 19)	130	62.8%	71	62.3%
No data	10	4.8%	3	2.6%

Education consortia	Base raw	Base %	Response raw	Response %
North Wales	54	26.1%	31	27.2%
South West and Mid Wales	61	29.5%	33	28.9%
Central South Wales	56	27.1%	31	27.2%
South East Wales	36	17.4%	19	16.7%

School Governance Type	Base raw	Base %	Response raw	Response %
Community School	169	81.6%	94	82.5%
Voluntary Aided School	19	9.2%	12	10.5%
Voluntary Controlled School	1	0.5%	0	0.0%
Foundation School	8	3.9%	5	4.4%
No data	10	4.8%	3	2.6%

Language	Base raw	Base %	Response raw	Response %
Welsh Medium - Welsh	22	10.6%	15	13.2%
Welsh Medium - Bilingual (Type A)	19	9.2%	12	10.5%
Welsh Medium - Bilingual (Type B)	12	5.8%	6	5.3%
Welsh Medium - Bilingual (Type C)	3	1.4%	3	2.6%
English Medium - English Medium	143	69.1%	72	63.2%
English Medium - English with significant Welsh	8	3.9%	6	5.3%

Free School Meal Eligibility Quintile	Base raw	Base %	Response raw	Response %
High	37	17.9%	19	16.7%
Middle-High	42	20.3%	24	21.1%
Middle	39	18.8%	26	22.8%
Middle-Low	39	18.8%	20	17.5%
Low	40	19.3%	22	19.3%
No data	10	4.8%	3	2.6%

