



# Language Trends 2014/15

The state of language learning in primary and secondary schools in England

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## About the authors

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### Kathryn Board OBE

Kathryn Board 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 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.



### Teresa Tinsley

Teresa Tinsley established and developed the Language Trends series of surveys which have charted the health of languages in various sectors of education since 2002. As well as producing and analysing information on the situation of languages in English secondary schools, the surveys have also covered provision for community languages across the UK, and language learning in Further and Adult Education.

Formerly Director of Communications at CILT, the National Centre for Languages, Teresa founded Alcantara Communications in 2011 and since then has undertaken policy-focused research on languages for the British Academy and the British Council, as well as CfBT Education Trust. Her work for CfBT includes an international review of primary languages, *Lessons from abroad*, as well as the Language Trends reports from 2011 to 2014.

## Acknowledgements

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## Executive summary

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Language Trends 2014/15 is the latest in the series of annual reports on language teaching based on online surveys completed by teachers in representative samples of schools from across the country. Surveys of secondary schools began in 2002 and cover both state and independent sectors. From 2012 onwards state primary schools have also been surveyed. This year's report focuses particularly on the initial impact of compulsory status for languages in Key Stage 2 which was introduced in September 2014, and on continuing concerns about the number and profile of pupils who study a language beyond the compulsory phase in secondary schools. Concern about the drop in the number of pupils taking A levels in language subjects gave rise to two separate inquiries by national bodies in 2014. This report probes further into the issues raised.

The research presented in this report was carried out under the joint management of the British Council and CfBT Education Trust between September and December 2014. For the first time the Language Trends surveys have been complemented by a small number of case studies as illustrations of schools which demonstrate a real commitment to languages and which are finding interesting ways of overcoming challenges.

### Key findings

- The introduction of compulsory language teaching in Key Stage 2 has had an immediate impact on the number of primary schools teaching a language. Almost all schools responding to the survey (99 per cent) now do so and 12 per cent say they have just started in the current (2014/15) academic year.
- Secondary school teachers are concerned about the wide variation in the quality of provision of language teaching at Key Stage 2 and sceptical of many primary schools' ability to deliver what they regard as a worthwhile level of language knowledge that pupils can apply to their studies in secondary school.
- There is a growing trend in both the state and independent sectors, but particularly in state secondary schools, to exclude or excuse pupils from the study of a language for a variety of reasons. The practice of disapplication of pupils in Key Stage 3, and of restricting access to language study in Key Stage 4, is associated with socio-economic disadvantage. In the most economically deprived category of schools, 17 per cent exclude groups of pupils from language study in Key Stage 3 and 44 per cent exclude some pupils from language study at Key Stage 4.
- There are a number of factors threatening the future of language study at A level. These include the impact of performance measures, grading and assessment systems, arrangements for languages lower down the school, increasingly tight budgets for post-16 courses and student perceptions of the relative value of languages in relation to the risk of not obtaining a high grade.
- Schools with high levels of take-up for languages, where pupils with a range of different abilities take the subject to GCSE, are unfairly represented as underperforming in government accountability measures, which are based on achievement, not on participation. This is leading to cuts in language provision.

- French is overwhelmingly the language most frequently taught in primary schools and is offered by well over 90 per cent of secondary schools. However, in secondary schools there is a trend towards fewer pupils studying both French and German, and there are difficulties establishing and sustaining provision for lesser-taught languages. Of the main languages taught, only Spanish is expanding, but more slowly than the rate of decline for French and German. French is declining more rapidly in the independent sector than in state schools.

### Languages in primary schools

The introduction of compulsory language teaching in Key Stage 2 has had an immediate impact both on the number of primary schools teaching a language and on the provision of many of those which already did so. Almost all schools responding to this survey (99 per cent) now teach a language and 12 per cent say they have just started in the current (2014/15) academic year. The evidence shows that many schools have formalised or strengthened provision by teaching a language more regularly or more rigorously. As many as 38 per cent of schools report that they have increased the resources available for languages. The introduction of compulsory language teaching in primary schools enjoys widespread support: some 87 per cent of respondents welcome the measure; and almost all of those that do not welcome the measure support the intention, but are sceptical about the quality of teaching that can be provided.

As many as 40 per cent of responding schools are confident that they already meet the requirements of the new national curriculum in full. Finding sufficient curriculum time for languages, boosting staff confidence to teach languages and increasing the linguistic competence of staff are the greatest challenges that schools face in meeting the requirements of the national curriculum. However, only 17 per cent of responding schools have invested in extra training for teachers and only six per cent have recruited new staff.

Schools in the lowest quintile of educational achievement, and those with the highest proportions of children eligible for free school meals, are the most likely to be in the early stages of developing language teaching and the least likely to have mechanisms in place for monitoring and assessing language learning. Schools with high proportions of pupils with English as an Additional Language are less likely to see this fact as a challenge in relation to the teaching of new languages than are those with more monolingual pupil populations.

In the majority of primary schools (57 per cent), language teaching is mainly carried out by the class teacher, although there is evidence of the involvement of a wide range of other people, including parents, specialist teachers, governors and language assistants. While 42 per cent of schools have teachers who are either native speakers of the language being taught or who have specialist qualifications in the language, as many as 31 per cent do not have any staff with more than a GCSE in a language.

Although over half of responding schools report that they participate in networking or continuing professional development (CPD) events with other primary schools, the proportion of primary schools taking part in training organised by local authorities has declined from 41 per cent in 2013/14 to 31 per cent in 2014/15, and the number of primary schools receiving subject-specific support from local secondary schools has also dropped, from 34 per cent to 18 per cent.

Some 49 per cent of primary schools are also introducing pupils in Key Stage 1 to a language even though this is not a statutory requirement.

### Transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3

Independent schools are more likely than state schools to be able to offer pupils the opportunity to continue learning the language they learned in Key Stage 2 (51 per cent versus 28 per cent).

Secondary teachers are concerned about the wide variations in quality of provision of language teaching at Key Stage 2 and sceptical of many primary schools' ability to deliver what they regard as a worthwhile level of language knowledge that pupils can apply to their studies in secondary school.

While educational policy suggests that schools have a responsibility to ensure the effective transition of pupils from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3, as many as 44 per cent of primary schools in England still have no contact with the secondary schools to which their pupils move at the end of Year 6. In parallel to this, a quarter of secondary schools (24 per cent) have no contact with any of their feeder primary schools in relation to languages and say they are not able to manage cross-phase collaboration as a result of externally driven issues which are beyond their ability to resolve. Those secondary schools participating in this year's survey cite large numbers of primary feeders, teacher capacity and time pressures as well as lack of interest on the part of primary schools as the main reasons why they are unable to establish sustainable collaboration with their primary feeders in order to ease pupil transition from Key Stage 2 to 3. Financial constraints and other pressures have led to the cessation of previous joint working between primary and secondary schools and there is evidence of highly valued cross-phase collaboration coming to an end as a result of the withdrawal of funding for specialist language colleges.

By way of contrast, there are many examples of secondary schools organising events and competitions designed to motivate young language learners from Key Stage 2 and support transition to secondary school. A number of schools comment that older pupils from Key Stage 3 upwards are involved in extra-curricular clubs and conversation support for younger pupils.

### Take-up and participation in languages in secondary schools

There is a growing trend in both the state and independent sectors, but particularly in state secondary schools, to exclude or excuse pupils from the study of a language for a variety of reasons. However, the independent sector remains much more likely to make languages compulsory for all pupils throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 than is the case in the state sector. In eight per cent of state schools, some groups of pupils do not study a language at Key Stage 3 and in 28 per cent of state schools not all pupils in Key Stage 4 are able to study a language if they wish to do so.

The practice of disapplication of pupils in Key Stage 3, and of restricting access to language study at Key Stage 4, is associated with socio-economic disadvantage. In the most economically deprived schools, the proportion excluding groups of pupils from language study in Key Stage 3 rises to 17 per cent and those excluding pupils from language study in Key Stage 4 rises to 44 per cent. It is increasingly common practice, now affecting 29 per cent of state schools, to reduce the number of hours in the timetable available for the study of a language in Key Stage 3.

After the increases noted in the Language Trends surveys of 2012 and 2013 in schools reporting higher take-up for languages to GCSE (attributed to the impact of the English Baccalaureate), the proportion of schools reporting increased take-up is declining. In 2012, more than half of responding schools said that numbers for languages had recently risen; in the current survey this proportion has dropped to 38 per cent.

A complex range of interrelated factors is threatening the future of language study at A level. These include the impact of performance measures, grading and assessment systems, arrangements for languages lower down the school, and increasingly tight budgets for post-16 courses. It is also affected by student perceptions of the relative value of languages in relation to the risk of not obtaining a high grade.

### Teaching and learning of languages in secondary schools

Two thirds of teachers find attracting pupils to study a language post-16 challenging. This emerges as the most widespread challenge for language teachers across the country; more challenging than issues such as take-up for GCSE. Languages are seen as more difficult than other subjects, less reliable in terms of delivering the top grades and not important in the eyes of many influencers. Unsuitable or unreliable forms of accreditation and the prioritisation of English and mathematics, together with the perceived career value of sciences, are creating a difficult climate for languages in schools.

Schools with high levels of take-up for languages where pupils of a range of different abilities take the subject to GCSE, are unfairly represented as underperforming in government accountability measures which are based on achievement, not participation. This is leading to cuts in language provision. Language provision in former specialist language colleges is particularly vulnerable to this effect since these schools practised a 'Languages for All' policy in line with their chosen specialist college status.

Opportunities for lower-ability pupils to study languages have been curtailed as a result of the decline of alternative accreditation such as NVQs, Asset Languages etc., following the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government's decision for these and other similar qualifications not to count towards schools' performance tables. Lower-ability pupils may be discouraged from taking a language to GCSE in order to maintain a school's rating in performance tables.

Many teachers are finding it difficult to access CPD due to heavy workloads and schools' budgetary constraints. There is, however, growing praise for technologically supported CPD, which is easier for many teachers to access, and also for training delivered by specialist organisations and universities.

### Conclusions

Four key conclusions can be drawn from the rich quantitative and qualitative data from teachers participating in this year's survey:

#### **Statutory status for languages at Key Stage 2 has had an immediate positive effect on language provision in primary schools**

The introduction of compulsory language teaching to all pupils at Key Stage 2 has had an immediate and positive impact as primary schools take steps to improve their provision in line with the requirements of the national curriculum. However, transition from Key Stage 2 to 3 remains a challenge, with many schools unable to establish collaboration, often for very practical reasons such as staff capacity, time pressure and budgetary constraints. Secondary teachers, in particular, are concerned whether primary schools will be able to provide language teaching to a standard and level of consistency which will enable them to build on pupils' prior learning when they arrive in Key Stage 3.

**There is a growing tendency for schools to exclude some pupils from language learning at Key Stages 3 and 4 with access to language learning often being linked to social advantage**

This affects mainly, but not exclusively, secondary schools and cuts across all key stages. The increasing tendency to excuse, exclude or disapply pupils from languages tuition at various stages creates a growing overall impression that schools are starting to regard languages as expendable for some pupils. The practice of disapplication of pupils in Key Stage 3, and of restricting access to language study in Key Stage 4, is associated with socio-economic disadvantage and is creating a widening gap in opportunities to learn to speak another language.

**External assessment systems and school performance measures are having a negative impact on the teaching of languages in secondary schools**

The impact of the English Baccalaureate in boosting take-up for languages in Key Stage 4 is declining and the current way in which schools' performance is measured is having a negative effect on language provision. Language departments which take pride in giving a broad spectrum of learners the opportunity to take a languages GCSE are being put under pressure and school leaders are having to make difficult choices which, in many cases, are leading to cuts in language provision. Decisions about whether languages should be compulsory for all or some pupils in Key Stage 4, or whether language study is even 'appropriate' for certain groups of pupils, are being taken not on educational grounds or with regard to the interests and potential of the pupils concerned, but on the need of schools to do well against accountability measures and in national performance tables. Neither the examinations themselves nor the way their results are used for school accountability are currently working in the interests of improving language learning in schools.

**Wider societal attitudes are adversely affecting an understanding of the value of languages and discouraging pupils from seeing languages as a serious subject for study**

A lack of awareness of the value of languages is commonplace. Influencers such as careers advisers, the media and parents have an important role to play and should help to explain how knowledge of a language can contribute to success with university studies and careers.

The significance of wider societal attitudes should not be underestimated, since they have the power to undermine initiatives and efforts to encourage young people at all stages of their education to study a language.

For young people in England, and the country as a whole to benefit from being able to speak languages other than English, solutions to the major challenges identified in this research need to be sought and applied at a whole-school level as well as openly supported by those who are in a position to influence the decisions of young people choosing study options and career paths.

# 1

## Introduction

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### **‘Learning a foreign language is a liberation from insularity and provides an opening to other cultures’<sup>1</sup>**

*Language Trends 2014/15* is the latest in a series of annual reports which began in 2002 and which chart the health of language teaching in English schools. The reports were originally based on a nationwide survey of a large sample of secondary schools and from 2012 the research was extended to include primary schools. This report therefore provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of language provision in English schools following a period of considerable educational policy change.

The data from Language Trends reports play an important role in policy development for languages. The reports provide a two-way conduit between schools and government, on the one hand charting the impact of government policies in schools and on the other reflecting the views and experiences of language teachers as they adapt to changing contexts for language teaching in schools.

### **1.1 | The policy context**

#### **Primary phase**

In September 2014, the study of a foreign language became a compulsory element of the Key Stage 2 curriculum for all English primary schools.<sup>2</sup> This marked the culmination of a process which started with the 2002 National Languages Strategy,<sup>3</sup> followed by a period of policy uncertainty during the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition Government’s review of the curriculum, and finally cross-party consensus that the primary curriculum should include the learning of a new language. This was supported by 82 per cent of those who responded to the Government’s public consultation.<sup>4</sup>

The Programmes of Study for languages in Key Stage 2 were published in September 2013 and included a strong focus on high standards of practical communication using both written and spoken language. Schools may teach any modern or ancient language and should enable pupils to make substantial progress in one language by the end of the Key Stage when they transfer to the secondary phase.<sup>5</sup>

Previously, the National Languages Strategy and the national programme of training and development which went with it saw the proportion of primary schools thought to be teaching a language rise from 20/25 per cent in 2002, to 92 per cent by 2008.<sup>6</sup>

As many as 97 per cent of the 719 primary schools which responded to the 2012 Language Trends survey reported that they were teaching a language – albeit with a very wide spectrum of approaches and practices as well as widely differing outcomes. This 2014/15 survey reports on the first impact of compulsory status, how state primary schools have gone about implementing the requirement for them to teach a language to all pupils in Key Stage 2, the challenges they have faced and the successes they have had.

<sup>1</sup> DfE (2013a)

<sup>2</sup> DfE (2013b)

<sup>3</sup> DfES (2002)

<sup>4</sup> DfE (2012)

<sup>5</sup> DfE (2013c)

<sup>6</sup> Wade, Marshall and O’Donnell (2009)

### Transition between primary and secondary phases

The new national curriculum requires primary schools to 'lay the foundations for future language learning in Key Stage 3'<sup>7</sup> and secondary schools to 'build on the foundations of language learning laid at Key Stage 2'.<sup>8</sup> The Language Trends survey 2013/14 provided evidence of a lack of systematic collaboration between primary and secondary schools, particularly at the point of transition from Year 6 to Year 7 and the consequences of this on pupils' progression in language learning.<sup>9</sup> School-based leaders, teachers and others working in languages education have continued to stress the importance of overcoming this challenge.<sup>10</sup> As in last year's report, a special focus on the topic of transition is included in this 2014/15 report, drawing together findings from survey respondents in both primary and secondary phases.

### Secondary phase

The Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition Government has driven major changes in the secondary school system through its programme of free schools and academies. By January 2014, as many as 57 per cent of secondary schools had become academies<sup>11</sup> and, as such, are not required to adhere to the national curriculum but rather are held to account through performance measures and Ofsted. Academies and free schools are independent of local authorities and this has impacted on the ability of local authorities to guide and support developments in language teaching. The 2010–2015 Coalition Government also withdrew targeted funding for Specialist Colleges, which formerly played a leading role in developing language teaching nationally and in their local areas. This meant that schools which had had specialist status were permitted to use their budgets as they wished. Teaching Schools were established comprising clusters of schools led by a secondary or primary school judged 'Outstanding' in teaching and learning by Ofsted and tasked with sharing their good practice with others.

The Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition Government was concerned about the steep decline in take-up for languages at GCSE, which went from 78 per cent of the cohort in 2001 to just 40 per cent in 2011.<sup>12</sup> Its main policy for stemming this decline was the English Baccalaureate (EBacc).<sup>13</sup> Originally conceived as a 'new award', its purpose was to boost the learning of academic subjects and it was awarded to any pupil who achieved a good GCSE in English, mathematics, science, a humanities subject and a modern or ancient language. It was introduced as an accountability measure for schools from January 2011 onwards and its effectiveness in boosting the numbers of pupils taking language subjects at Key Stage 4 was very clear from the data provided by Language Trends survey respondents from 2011 onwards. There was a seven percentage point increase in the proportion of state school pupils in England sitting a GCSE in a language in summer 2013 compared to 2012.

The EBacc has now been subsumed within a new accountability measure for secondary schools, Progress 8, based on pupils' progression in eight subjects between Key Stages 2 and 4. Three EBacc subjects form part of this measure, but these do not necessarily include a language. The new measure will be introduced for all schools from 2016 but schools can opt into it from 2015 and have received 'shadow' data based on their 2014 GCSE results in the course of 2014/2015. While the EBacc will continue to be used alongside the new measure, it is Progress 8 which will be the 'headline indicator of school performance'.<sup>14</sup> One aim of the 2014/15 survey has been, therefore,

<sup>7</sup> DfE (2013c)

<sup>8</sup> DfE (2013d)

<sup>9</sup> Tinsley and Board (2013)

<sup>10</sup> For example, the House of Lords debate on foreign language teaching held on 16/1/14: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ldhansard/text/140116-gc0001.html#14011665000552>

<sup>11</sup> DfE (2014a)

<sup>12</sup> Tinsley and Han (2012)

<sup>13</sup> DfE (2010)

<sup>14</sup> DfE (2014b)

to explore whether the recent upward trend in take-up for languages at Key Stage 4 is being sustained in the light of these changes to school accountability measures.

The level of difficulty required for language GCSEs in relation to the time available, and the severity of marking compared with that for other subjects, have long been identified as factors which deter both learners and schools.<sup>15</sup> Against this background, the Government continues to make progress towards its aim of introducing new GCSE examinations. New GCSEs for French, German and Spanish will be taught from September 2016 and for other languages a year later. The new language GCSEs are intended to be more demanding and more rigorous in assessing learners' understanding of grammar and structure. They will be based exclusively on terminal assessment and externally assessed; oral exams will be conducted by teachers but marked externally. The new GCSEs will be graded according to a new 1–9 scale and a key question will be comparability with other subjects, since research has shown that pupils of the same prior attainment gain, on average, half a grade less in modern languages than in other EBacc subjects.<sup>16</sup>

Two further factors militating against high take-up of languages are the increasing tendency of schools only to enter higher-ability pupils for language GCSEs, and the impact of native or background speakers taking exams in which they tend to receive high grades. These factors push up average grades in languages GCSEs and lead to the impression that schools where languages GCSEs are taken by a mixed-ability profile of pupils are failing.<sup>17</sup> The introduction of the new grading system offers an opportunity to bring subjects in line with each other and Ofqual is conducting an inter-subject comparability study aimed at achieving this.

### A level languages

Take-up for languages at A level – an issue identified in last year's Language Trends report – continues to be a serious concern.<sup>18</sup> In the course of 2014 this gave rise to two independent inquiries into the issues involved.

On behalf of the examining bodies, the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) undertook a substantial review of take-up rates for languages A levels and the proportion of A\* grades awarded in comparison with other subjects. It included qualitative research by Ipsos MORI based on in-depth interviews with sixth-form students and undergraduates, language teachers, university lecturers and employers, as well as an online survey of teachers. Its key findings fell into two categories, those connected with the examinations themselves and those stemming from wider social attitudes which, respondents felt, undervalue language skills, particularly in relation to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) subjects whose economic value is well reported. As regards the examinations themselves, 97 per cent of teachers reported that their students consider languages more difficult than other subjects at A level. There was a lack of confidence in the GCSE examination, with only 18 per cent of teachers believing that they give a fair evaluation of students' progress. Teachers pointed to the disproportionate jump in difficulty between GCSE and A level, and to the severity and unpredictability of grading which make language A levels a risk-laden choice for students. These findings corroborate those of previous Language Trends surveys.

The JCQ report also included a review of grading for languages and found that, although languages A levels generally have a higher proportion of candidates achieving A or A\* compared to other subjects, the proportion awarded A\* is lower. They attributed this to relatively weak performance in writing and a low correlation between grades achieved in the different skills. So far it is unclear

<sup>15</sup> Myers (2006)

<sup>16</sup> Myers, Mair and Blow (2015)

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Tinsley and Board (2013)

what examining bodies will do in relation to these findings, although the other review, carried out by Ofqual, included a series of recommendations for examination boards which are to be taken into account for the 2015 examinations. The Ofqual report called for questions and marking schemes which are more effective in differentiating between students of varying abilities in order to strengthen the relationship between marks awarded in different elements of the examination. It seems likely then, that some adjustments will be made to language A levels in the very near future, with the expectation being that the overall reform of GCSEs and A levels will deal with the wider issues. However, only a minority of teachers responding to the Ipsos MORI research believed that proposed reforms to the A level system would result in improved take-up for languages. This echoes findings from the 2013/14 Language Trends survey which found that only five or six per cent of teachers thought that the A level reforms would result in more students taking a language beyond GCSE.

In line with reform plans for other subjects, the reforms to languages A levels will do away with the current modular structure and 'decouple' them from AS, which will become freestanding examinations. An A level Content Advisory Board for Languages, made up of representatives of Russell Group universities, published recommendations on the content of the new language A levels and a public consultation was carried out during summer 2014. The final version was published by the DfE in December 2014, after this year's Language Trends survey had closed.<sup>19</sup> There is a new emphasis on the culture and society of the country or countries where the language is spoken and a requirement for critical analysis and evaluation. There is also a strong emphasis on the study of literary and other 'works' and on the learning of grammar. Ofqual has also published the assessment arrangements for the new language A levels and the examination boards must now develop the relevant syllabuses.

The university admissions service, UCAS, has undertaken research to investigate whether sixth forms will continue to offer the AS examination once it becomes freestanding. This reveals that only around half have definitely decided to continue to offer the AS in all subjects, and that the impact the examination reforms will have on the sixth form curriculum is still unclear.<sup>20</sup> A recent report by the Sixth Form Colleges Association highlighted the pressures on sixth form provision as a result of the new 16–19 funding formula introduced in September 2013, and reported that over a third of sixth form colleges had dropped courses in modern languages as a result of funding cuts, with A levels in Spanish and German the biggest casualties.<sup>21</sup> Respondents to the Ipsos MORI research felt that the 'decoupling' of AS from A level would have little or no impact on enthusiastic linguists but that the move would increase the risk of selecting language subjects at A level because students would have no opportunity to test their progress or their chances of achieving the high grades needed at A level before the terminal exam at the end of the two-year study period.

A further concern is the availability of different languages within the suite of reformed A levels. The examination board AQA has already announced that it will no longer be offering Bengali, Modern Hebrew, Panjabi and Polish, citing the difficulties of finding examiners for these subjects and low numbers of entries as the reason for their decision.<sup>22</sup> Since the decline in language teaching provision in sixth forms has been masked by an increase in the numbers of native or 'background speakers' taking examinations in languages they speak or learn outside school – Chinese is a particular case in point<sup>23</sup> – this move will only serve to further highlight the fragile position of language teaching at A level.

<sup>19</sup> DfE (2014c)

<sup>20</sup> UCAS (2015)

<sup>21</sup> Sixth Form Colleges Association (2014)

<sup>22</sup> AQA, Letter to Baroness Coussins, 27 January 2015

<sup>23</sup> Tinsley and Board (2015, forthcoming)

For all the reasons set out above, the situation of languages in schools post-16 forms a major focus of this report. In particular, we explore whether or not there is any evidence of a knock-on positive impact of the EBacc on the number of pupils continuing with language studies to A level.

### **Comparisons between the independent and the state sectors**

Over many years, Language Trends surveys have drawn attention to the differences between the independent and the state school sectors in terms of their provision for pupils to learn languages. The presentation of findings comparing approaches and practices in fee-paying schools with those which are publicly funded has been useful and instructive to both sectors. The comparison between the state and independent sectors has also highlighted issues of elitism and inequality of access to languages education. In 2013/14 our research also provided evidence for the first time of a decline in language teaching beginning to affect the independent sector. This topic is further explored in this year's report.

### **International comparisons**

European institutions including the European Commission and the Council of Europe have been major players in encouraging multilingualism and in demonstrating the value of languages for European businesses as well as individuals, enabling them to live, work or study in another EU country, should they wish to do so. In recent years there has been a particular drive to encourage the learning of language from a young age, as well as the learning of two 'foreign' languages.<sup>24</sup>

UK education systems perform poorly in international language learning comparisons. The results of the first European Survey on Language Competences<sup>25</sup> showed that only nine per cent of English pupils surveyed at age 15 were competent in their first foreign language beyond a basic level, compared with 42 per cent of their peers across all the European countries taking part. Two European 'benchmarks' in relation to language learning are designed to increase, across EU member states, the proportion of 15-year-olds achieving 'beyond basic' competence in their first foreign language, and the proportion of pupils learning more than one foreign language.<sup>26</sup> A comparative analysis of languages in education and training published in 2014 found that England was among the group of countries which had 'significant challenges' in relation to addressing both of these aspirations.<sup>27</sup> In England the proportion of pupils reaching level B1 or higher in their first foreign language by the end of secondary education is less than half the European benchmark, while fewer than 25 per cent of pupils reach level A2 or higher in a second foreign language. (Levels refer to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.<sup>28</sup>)

To inform this debate the Language Trends report seeks to provide reliable data on the extent to which pupils in English secondary schools have opportunities to study more than one language and how schools organise this provision.

## **1.2 | The value of languages**

The predominance of English as a global language undoubtedly affects attitudes towards the learning of other languages. Although there are strong educational, economic and socio-cultural reasons for English native speakers to learn another language, achieving wide recognition with key influencers and the general public of the value of language remains a major challenge.

<sup>24</sup> Barcelona European Council (2002)

<sup>25</sup> European Commission (2012a)

<sup>26</sup> European Commission (2012b)

<sup>27</sup> European Commission (2014)

<sup>28</sup> Council of Europe: [http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/framework\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/source/framework_en.pdf)

New research published in 2014 provides compelling evidence of the importance of languages for trade and calculates that the value of business lost to the UK annually because of language barriers is 3.5 per cent of GDP.<sup>29</sup> The 2014 CBI/Pearson Education and Skills survey highlights the mixed messages given out by employers with regard to the value they attach to languages. In other words, the survey shows that while 65 per cent of businesses value language skills among their employees, and 62 per cent are dissatisfied with school/college leavers' language skills and international cultural awareness, languages do not emerge as a high priority for the education sector, and rank bottom in terms of factors considered when recruiting graduates.<sup>30</sup> However, there is growing awareness of the value of languages for diplomacy and foreign engagement as new Foreign and Commonwealth policies, including the opening of a new language training centre, show.<sup>31</sup>

New research also published in 2014 added weight to the value of speaking more than one language for long-term cognitive function. Of a cohort of more than 1,000 people born in 1936, Edinburgh University found that those who had learned another language performed significantly better in recent cognitive tests than would be expected on the basis on their initial IQ test.<sup>32</sup> Another piece of research showed the impact of languages on rational thinking. The researchers showed that thinking in another language helps logical thinking because it reduces the tendency to make quick, emotionally-charged decisions. This effect reduces the more fluent the speaker is in the language used; it is the need to expend more brainpower and reason more carefully, which produces this result.<sup>33</sup>

Recent research published by the British Council has highlighted the importance of the UK's community languages in providing a skills-base in the full range of languages likely to be important to the UK in future, whether for trade, security, diplomacy or cultural engagement.<sup>34</sup> The proportion of children in English primary schools whose first language is believed not to be English rose to 18.7 per cent in 2014. In secondary schools the proportion is 14.3 per cent.<sup>35</sup> This year's report explores teachers' views on the impact of existing multilingualism on the teaching of new languages in English schools.

### 1.3 | Language Trends 2014/15

This year's survey report follows a similar format to that of the 2013/14 report. Details of the methodology used in this research exercise as well as information about sample sizes and response rates are provided in Chapter 2. The survey findings are preceded by an analysis of the latest GCSE and A level data on languages in relation to trends over the previous decade (in the case of GCSE) or two decades (in the case of A level).

This year's report includes for the first time a number of case studies drawn up following visits by researchers to a small selection of English primary and secondary schools. Each of the schools visited provides an interesting insight into some aspect of language teaching covered in this survey report, from working with large percentages of children with English as an Additional Language (EAL) to managing the challenges of small numbers at A level or trying to increase take-up at Key Stage 4. The criteria used for selecting schools for visits is set out in Chapter 2.

<sup>29</sup> Foreman-Peck and Wang (2014)

<sup>30</sup> CBI (2014)

<sup>31</sup> British Academy (2013)

<sup>32</sup> De Lange (2014)

<sup>33</sup> *The Economist* (17 May 2014)

<sup>34</sup> British Council (2013)

<sup>35</sup> DfE (2014a)

Please note the following:

- In common with previous years, the survey period ran from late September to early December (2014). Therefore when dates are mentioned, the academic year in question is normally that beginning in the year quoted, e.g. 2014 refers to the academic year 2014/15. The exception to this is that when quoting exam figures in Chapter 3, dates refer to the summer examinations in the year mentioned.
- Percentages have generally been rounded to the nearest whole number throughout.

# 2

## Research design and data collection

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

### 2.1 | Analysis of examination data

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

### 2.2 | Development of the questionnaires

Questionnaires for primary and secondary schools were developed in August 2014 by the researchers in consultation with the commissioning organisations, the British Council and CfBT Education Trust, and with the Association for Language Learning (ALL) and the Independent Schools' Modern Languages Association (ISMLA). These were uploaded to the online survey platform Survey Monkey and trialled in early September 2014.

#### Primary questionnaire

Questions were based on those also used in the 2012 and 2013 surveys, in order to track emerging trends. Some questions were updated to reflect the fact that languages had become statutory in the Key Stage 2 curriculum and the wording of others was clarified. Only one question which had been in previous surveys, regarding the confidence of staff to teach languages, was omitted because the issue of teachers' confidence was already covered in another question.

Questions were designed to explore the extent of provision for languages; which languages are offered; how the teaching of languages is organised; and what challenges schools face in implementing the new national curriculum requirement to teach a language. The survey also seeks to determine the extent to which primary schools are in contact with local secondary schools on issues relating to languages. More specifically, the following areas are covered:

- Whether the school offers pupils the opportunity to learn another language
- If schools are not teaching languages, whether they have done so in the past
- Which languages are taught, and whether all pupils receive language tuition
- How much time is provided for the teaching of languages
- How schools monitor and assess progress in language learning

- What types of contact schools have with local secondary schools
- What documentation forms the basis of the languages programme
- Who provides the teaching of languages, and what qualifications staff have in the languages they teach
- How schools access CPD for languages
- Strengths and challenges in providing language tuition
- Any changes schools are making to language teaching provision in order to meet the requirements of the new national curriculum
- Whether schools welcome statutory status for languages in Key Stage 2

### Secondary questionnaire

Over the 13 years during which the secondary Language Trends survey has been carried out, many new questions have been added and the questionnaire was thought to have become unwieldy and therefore a barrier to achieving a high response rate. The number of questions was therefore reduced by about one third, from 37 to 24 questions. Among the questions omitted were specific questions relating to the EBacc, challenges of the new national curriculum and views on A level reforms. These issues are explored through a single question asking about a range of issues which schools might find challenging, and which had been identified from previous surveys. Teachers were also encouraged to provide their views on these issues in the extensive space available for free comments. To enable longitudinal comparisons, the remaining questions in the questionnaire are the same or similar to those in previous years' surveys. They explore take-up and participation for languages in each key stage and the response to recent policy developments such as reforms to qualifications and performance measures.

The following topics are explored:

- The range of languages offered in schools at Key Stage 3, Key Stage 4, post-16 and outside curriculum time
- Whether pupils have the opportunity to learn more than one language and if so how this is organised
- To what extent teachers see a variety of issues as challenging in their school
- How secondary schools access CPD for languages
- Accreditation offered for languages

In addition, the survey explores the following in relation to each key stage:

### **Key Stage 3**

- Whether all pupils study a language throughout Key Stage 3 and any changes that have been introduced
- Whether schools have contacts with local primary schools on language issues and how they build on pupils' prior learning to ensure continuity and progression from Key Stage 2

### **Key Stage 4**

- Whether languages are optional or compulsory for some or all pupils at Key Stage 4 in the school
- Whether any pupils are prevented from studying a language at Key Stage 4
- Current school trends in language take-up at Key Stage 4

### **Post-16**

- Current school trends in the take-up of languages post-16
- If schools have experienced recent increases in take-up at Key Stage 4, whether these are also leading to increases post-16

## **2.3 | Data collection**

A random sample of 3,000 schools was selected from the population of state-funded mainstream primary schools with pupils reaching the end of Key Stage 2, thus excluding infant and first schools. The sample was selected to be representative by region and performance quintile (based on the average point score as published in the 2013 Primary School Performance Tables).

A random sample of 2,500 secondary schools was selected from the Department for Education database (EduBase – [www.education.gov.uk/edubase](http://www.education.gov.uk/edubase)). The sample comprised 2,000 state-funded schools and 500 independent schools. The state-funded sample was selected to be representative by region and performance quintile (based on the average total point score per pupil at Key Stage 4 as published in the 2013 Secondary School Performance Tables) and in the case of independent schools to be representative by region. The sample excluded middle schools and special schools.

### **Invitation to schools**

In September 2014 an invitation to complete the online questionnaire was sent out to all schools in the sample, addressed to the head of languages in the case of the secondary schools and to headteachers in primary schools. Letters were signed by the Chief Executives of CfBT Education Trust and the British Council.

Reminder letters were sent to heads of languages and primary headteachers to arrive in schools the week after half term, with a deadline of 17 November for responses. Schools which had not replied by the deadline were emailed with a further reminder and as an incentive to complete the questionnaire, two free places were offered at the Association for Language Learning's annual conference, one for a primary school respondent and one for a secondary school.

### **Achieved sample**

A total of 648 primary schools, 529 state-funded secondary schools, and 128 independent secondary schools responded to the survey, yielding response rates of 22, 27 and 26 per cent respectively. These response rates were all higher than those for the 2013 survey.

Comparisons of the achieved sample with the national population of schools have been carried out (see Appendix). In general the profile of schools responding to our survey are a good match with the profile of schools nationally in terms of their educational performance and geographic location. In the primary responses there is a slight bias towards schools in the middle performance quintile and away from schools in the low-to-medium performance quintile. Geographically there is a slight bias towards primary schools in the East Midlands and away from schools in the South East. Primary schools with high numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals are under-represented but on the whole the response profile is reasonably representative.

In the state secondary schools achieved sample, schools with high numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals are also under-represented – by a higher proportion than in the primary sample – and schools in the highest socio-economic quintile are over-represented. The secondary sample also leans slightly towards schools in the highest performance quintile and away from schools in the middle performance quintile. Schools with low proportions of pupils with English as an Additional Language are over-represented in our response group and the middle group is under-represented. There is a higher proportion of converter academies and a lower proportion of sponsor-led academies among the responding secondary schools than in the national base. Geographically, schools in the West Midlands are slightly under-represented.

In the achieved sample of independent schools there is an over-representation of mid- to high-achieving schools and an under-representation of schools in the low-to-mid and low performance quintile. This may be because independent special schools – often very small schools – are not always defined as such in the DfE database. Independent schools in the North West are slightly over-represented and those in the East Midlands slightly under-represented.

It is possible that the achieved sample may be biased in favour of schools which are particularly concerned about languages and therefore chose to answer the questionnaire. In the primary sample, this is likely to mean that schools already teaching a language may be over-represented. This has been taken into account when discussing the extent to which the survey findings represent the national picture and should be borne in mind by others when citing figures.

The tables setting out the sample characteristics are provided in the Appendix.

## **2.4 | Case study visits**

In order to provide richer evidence to complement the quantitative and qualitative data produced by the survey, it was decided to feature a small number of case studies in this year's research exercise. The aim was to provide teachers and others reading the report with a number of working examples of schools committed to providing their pupils with positive experiences of language learning.

It was decided that the researchers would visit two primary and three secondary schools, distributed around England, with varied educational and socio-economic profiles and likely to constitute good models of provision.

### Selection of primary schools

In the absence of comprehensive national data on language provision, findings from the 2013 Language Trends primary surveys were used to draw up a shortlist of schools which reported that they:

- fully meet the requirements of the national curriculum
- monitor and assess pupil progress
- have good contacts with local secondary schools

This produced a list of 45 schools which were further filtered down to two on the basis of free comments and geographic location, prioritising schools working in more challenging socio-economic circumstances. These were Canning Street Primary School in Newcastle and Yeadon Junior School in Hayes, both of which agreed to host a visit.

### Selection of secondary schools

Key Stage 4 performance data from 2013 and 2011 were used to select potential secondary schools. Researchers sought to identify schools with high proportions of pupils sitting a GCSE in a language and representing a range of different socio-economic and educational profiles. A shortlist of three categories of school was drawn up, based on the following criteria:

- A. A school in which a greater proportion of pupils (40 percentage points or more) take languages at GCSE than obtain five A\*-C including English and mathematics. A total of 14 schools met this criterion.
- B. A school which has recently dramatically improved the proportion of pupils taking a language at GCSE (60 percentage points or more). A total of 14 schools also met this criterion, three of which also met criterion A.
- C. A school with a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils (40 per cent or more eligible for free school meals) with a high proportion (60 per cent or more) sitting a languages GCSE. Two schools met this criterion.

It was hard to secure the agreement of shortlisted secondary schools to host a visit and the feedback received by researchers in following them up itself constitutes an important finding, since it highlights the pressures faced by schools in maintaining high proportions of pupils sitting GCSEs in a language.

Researchers first approached the three schools falling into both categories A and B to ascertain if it would be possible to undertake a visit to the languages department. Two were schools which had made languages compulsory in response to the EBacc policy, but had subsequently made languages optional again. Both schools stated that, for this reason, they did not think that they would make suitable case studies. The third school also said that arrangements for languages were being changed and they were unlikely to be able to provide a suitable case study for us.

Schools in category A were almost all (former) specialist language colleges and had high proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals. Two were approached, one with a very high proportion of EAL pupils, and initially agreed to allow researchers to visit, but then withdrew without giving a clear reason. The other, Litherland High School in Liverpool, was visited by researchers on 20 November 2014.

Two of the 11 schools meeting category B were contacted and one, The Downs School, a former specialist language college near Newbury, was visited on 19 January 2015.

Researchers approached both schools in category C; however, neither was able to accommodate a case study visit. One had recently appointed a new headteacher and felt it was not appropriate. The other disputed the Performance Table figures, saying that only 45 of its cohort of 120 were taking a language and felt that it was not a good example of what was being sought.

Researchers therefore, had to widen the scope of selection to identify a third secondary school. This was Ravens Wood School, a boys' school in Bromley in which, according to 2013 figures, a higher proportion of pupils sat GCSE in a language than achieved five A\*-C at GCSE including English and mathematics. As a boys' school with a strong record of achievement in German, it provides a valuable case study for this report.

There are two conclusions to be drawn from this selection process. Firstly, specialist language colleges or former specialist language colleges still make up a significant proportion of schools which are 'bucking the trend' in languages; however, as our case studies demonstrate, some are now withdrawing from their commitment to languages for a variety of reasons. Secondly, the recent changes to school accountability are giving rise to some anomalous figures as schools make changes to their curricula and options systems from one year to the next. These changes do not favour languages.

### **Conduct of visits**

Researchers conducted a half-day visit to each school selected as a case study, interviewing both teachers and pupils. In some cases, but not all, they were also able to observe language lessons or interview a member of the senior leadership team. In the case of primary schools, they explored the history and rationale for teaching languages as well as the organisation and delivery of language teaching and the attitudes of pupils, parents and other teachers within the school. In the case of secondary schools, the focus was on the structure of provision for languages in each key stage, the opportunities for pupils to engage with language learning beyond the exam syllabus, and the part languages and language qualifications played in relation to pupils' aspirations for their future careers.

Information gathered during the visits was supplemented by DfE-published data and has enabled this year's report to provide a more complete picture of the value of language learning in primary and secondary schools and the challenges faced.

# 3

## School examination data in England

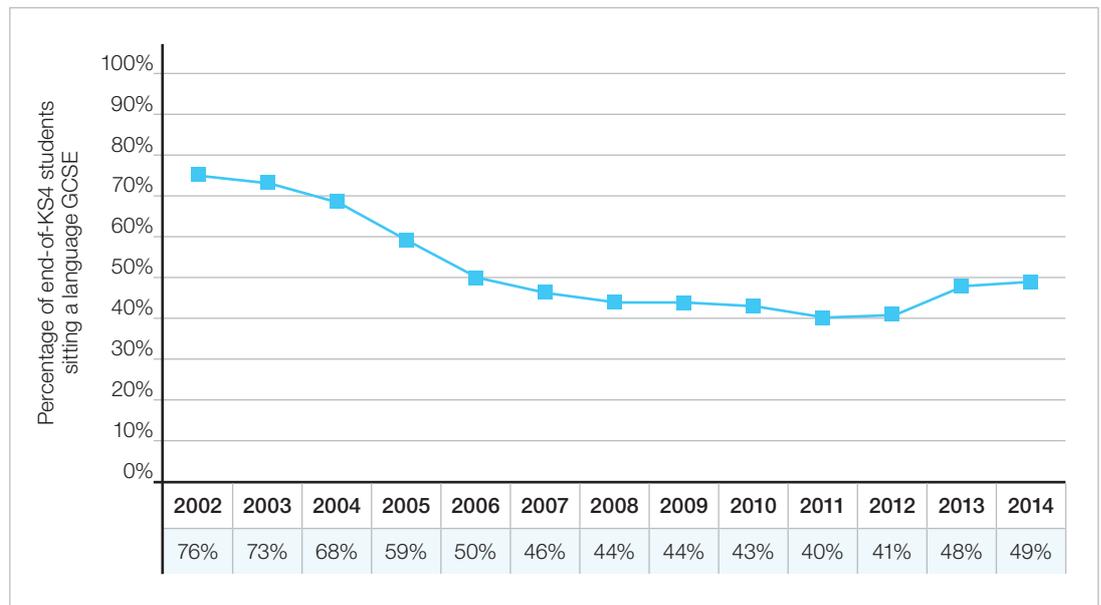
The data summarised below are based on the latest DfE examination entry figures and cover all GCSE entries for pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 and A level entries for 16–18 year olds in English secondary schools and colleges, both state-funded and independent. The figures provided are those for the examinations results of summer 2014, which were published by the DfE in January 2015. They include time-series data either provided by the DfE or held on record by the authors.

### 3.1 | GCSE

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

The proportion of the total cohort sitting a GCSE in a language rose by one percentage point between 2013 and 2014. This continues the rise in entries seen from 2012 onwards and which is closely associated with the English Baccalaureate policy. However, this year the rate of increase is only one percentage point compared with a seven point increase between 2012 and 2013.

**Figure 1:** Proportion of end-of-Key-Stage 4 pupils sitting a GCSE in a language, 2002–2014



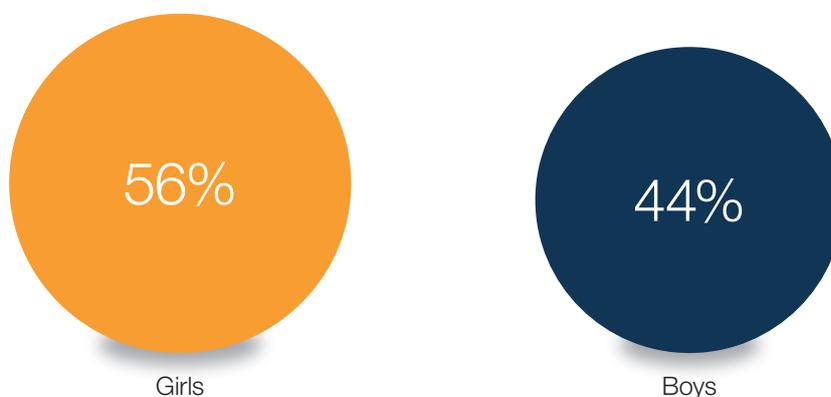
**Table 1:** Rates of participation by language

Language	Percentage of end-of-KS4 students taking a GCSE
French	26%
Spanish	14%
German	9%
Italian	1%
Polish	1%
Urdu	1%
Other modern languages	2%
Latin	1%

**GCSE entries by gender**

A disproportionately larger number of girls (56 per cent) than boys sat language GCSEs in 2014. This proportion is the same as in 2013.

**Figure 2:** GCSE language entries at end of Key Stage 4 by gender, 2014

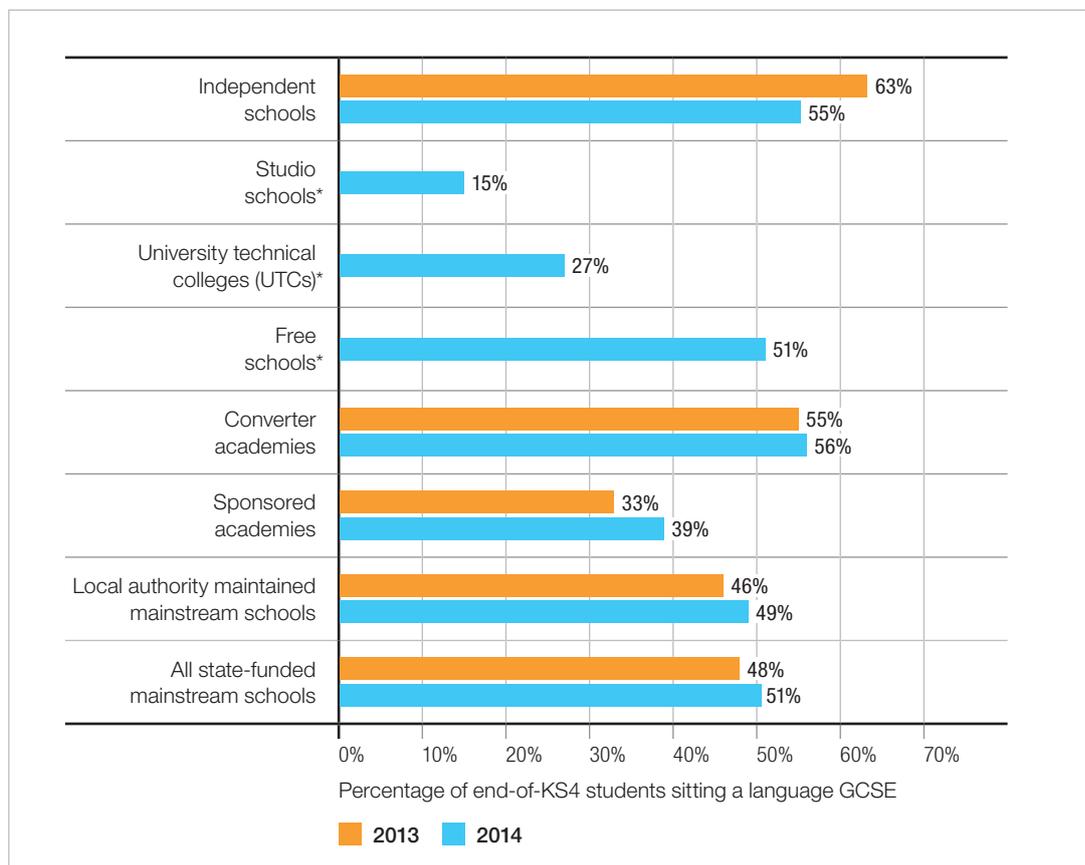


**GCSE entries by type of school**

The proportion of pupils sitting a GCSE at the end of Key Stage 4 is higher than average in independent schools, free schools and converter academies. Comparatively low numbers of pupils sit a language at GCSE in studio schools, university technical colleges and sponsored academies.

Between 2013 and 2014, the proportion of pupils taking a language GCSE at the end of Key Stage 4 has increased in most types of state-funded school; however, in independent schools the proportion has declined. This appears to be because independent schools are increasingly moving towards using IGCSE and other forms of assessment (see section on accreditation in Chapter 7).

Figure 3: GCSE language entries at end of Key Stage 4 by type of school, 2013 and 2014

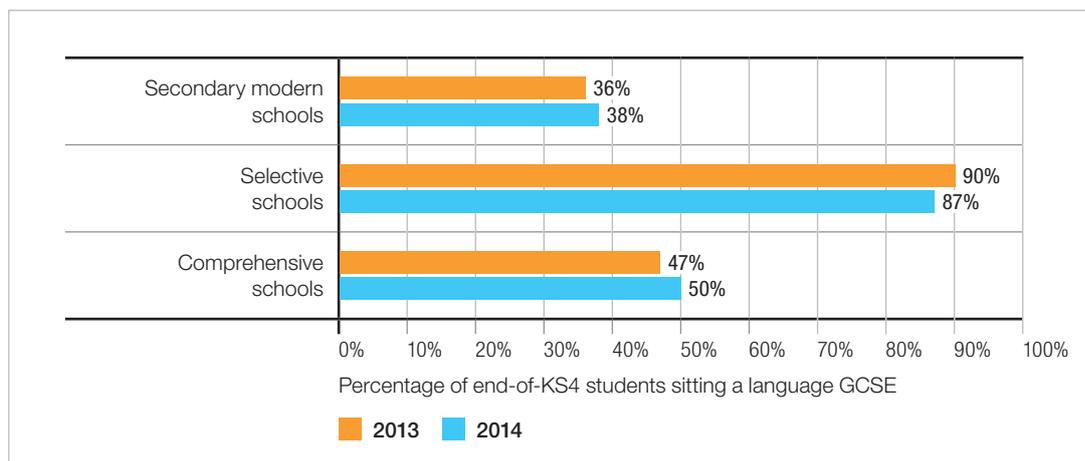


\*A combined percentage for these types of school was given as 44 per cent in 2013.

Schools which select pupils (on academic and/or other criteria) have far higher entry rates for languages GCSE than do those secondary schools, such as comprehensives, which are non-selective. This reflects the concentration of language study among pupils deemed to be of higher academic ability.

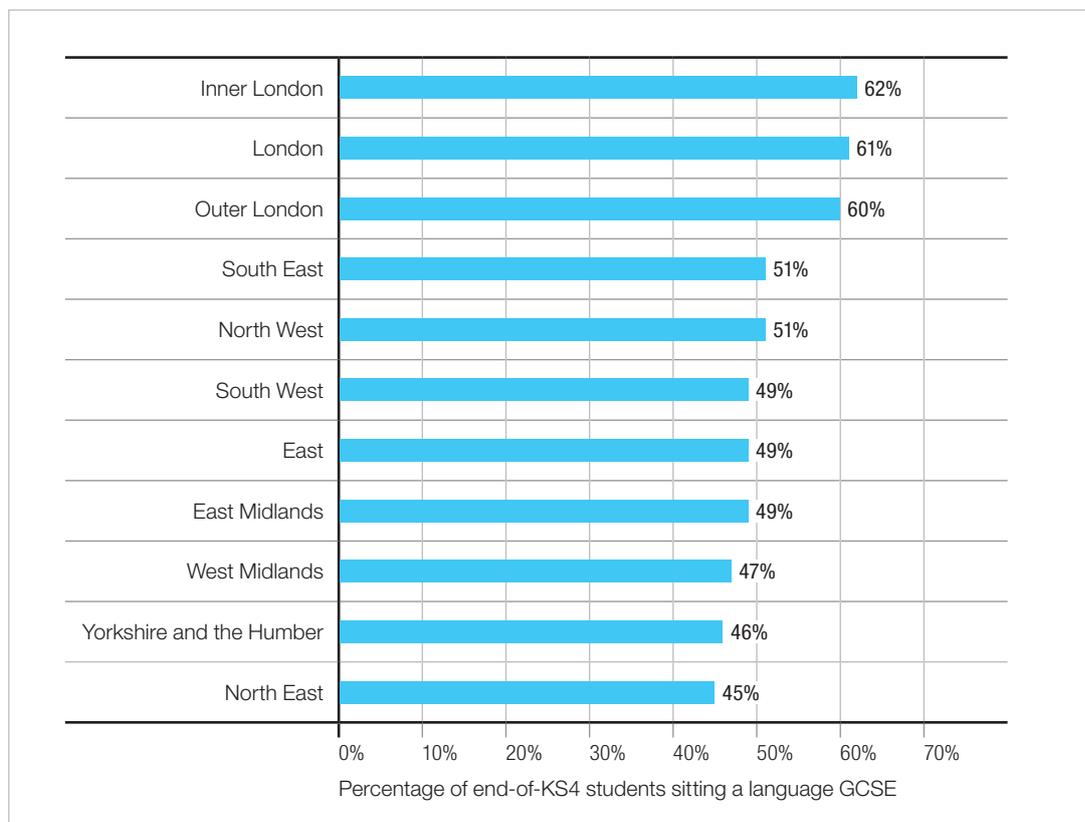
However, between 2013 and 2014, the survey data shows that the high proportion of pupils from selective schools entering for GCSE has seen a decline, while conversely, the lower proportion of pupils entering for a GCSE in non-selective schools has seen an increase.

**Figure 4:** GCSE language entries at end of Key Stage 4 by admission basis of school, 2013 and 2014



**GCSE language entries by region**

**Figure 5:** GCSE language entries at end of Key Stage 4 by region, 2014



Within each region, uptake of languages for GCSE varies by local authority. In Middlesbrough, in the North East, only just over a quarter of pupils take a language to GCSE, whereas nearly three quarters do so in Barnet (Outer London).

Nine of the ten local authorities with the highest proportions of pupils taking a language at GCSE are in London. York, in fifth place, is the exception:

**Table 2:** Local authorities where the highest proportions of pupils take a language GCSE

Local authority	Percentage of end-of-KS4 students taking a language GCSE
Barnet	70.8%
Hammersmith and Fulham	69.5%
Newham	68.7%
Hounslow	67.7%
York	67.3%
Kensington and Chelsea	67.1%
Southwark	66.6%
Kingston upon Thames	65.9%
Harrow	65.5%
Enfield	65.2%

The ten local authorities with the smallest proportions of pupils taking a language at GCSE are spread across the whole of England with the exception of London and the East of England.

**Table 3:** Local authorities where the lowest proportions of pupils take a language GCSE

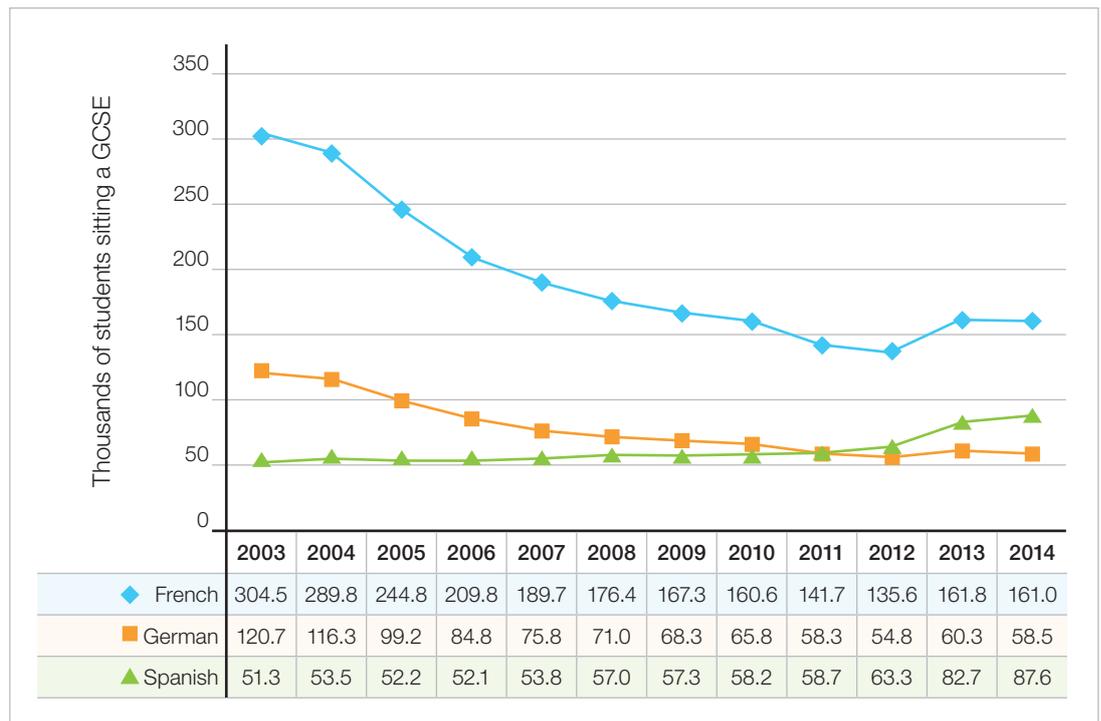
Local authority	Percentage of end-of-KS4 students taking a language GCSE
Middlesbrough	26.6%
Barnsley	28.0%
Isle of Wight	33.1%
Doncaster	34.2%
Redcar and Cleveland	35.8%
Bracknell Forest	36.4%
Isles of Scilly	36.4%
Knowsley	36.7%
Blackpool	36.9%
Sandwell	37.0%
Stoke-on-Trent	39.4%

The exceptionally high take-up of languages in London schools is interesting in the light of other research which has reported on the wider phenomenon of educational success in London compared to the rest of the country,<sup>36</sup> although it is beyond the scope of this report to investigate this.

**Trends in take-up by language**

After more than a decade of falling entries, the number of pupils sitting French GCSE rose by 19 per cent between 2012 and 2013; however, the figures for 2014 show that this increase has not been sustained and that entries have once again declined, although only slightly. The same trend is in evidence for German: entries rose by 10 per cent between 2012 and 2013, but the most recent figures for 2014 show a decline of three per cent. By contrast, Spanish continues its upward trend, showing a six per cent increase between 2013 and 2014, on top of a 31 per cent increase the previous year. Entries for GCSE across all subjects rose by four per cent between 2012 and 2013 and by two per cent between 2013 and 2014.

**Figure 6:** GCSE entries at end of Key Stage 4, England, 2003–2014, main languages taught



Time-series data comparing the entry figures for languages which are not commonly taught in English schools are only available for the period from 2008 onwards. Of these, Arabic, Chinese, Italian, Polish and Urdu have the highest entry figures and are shown separately. Other languages available at GCSE (Russian, Portuguese, Turkish, Bengali, Japanese, Panjabi, Gujarati, Persian, Dutch, Modern Greek and Modern Hebrew) have smaller entry figures and are provided by the DfE as a combined figure.<sup>37</sup>

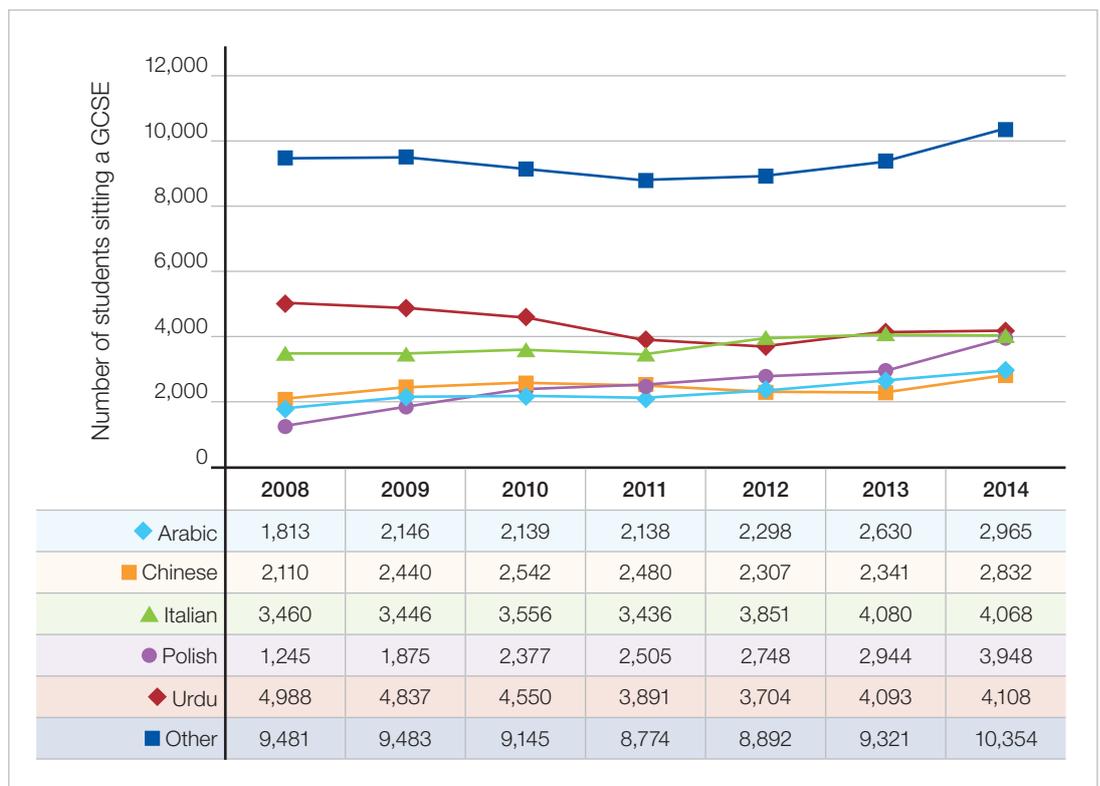
<sup>36</sup> Baars et al. (2014)

<sup>37</sup> The overarching body JCQ makes available the breakdown of entries for each of these languages, but the figures include all entries across the UK from candidates of all ages and types of institution.

Urdu, Italian and Polish all have similar numbers of entries in 2014 but their trajectories since 2008 have been different. While entries for Urdu have declined by eight per cent over seven years, entries for Polish have more than trebled, reflecting recent immigration patterns. Entries for Italian have fluctuated somewhat, but in 2014 were 18 per cent higher than they were in 2008.

Arabic and Chinese also have similar numbers of entries and have both grown since 2008, although not on the scale seen for Polish.

**Figure 7:** GCSE entries at end of Key Stage 4, England, 2008–2014, lesser-taught languages



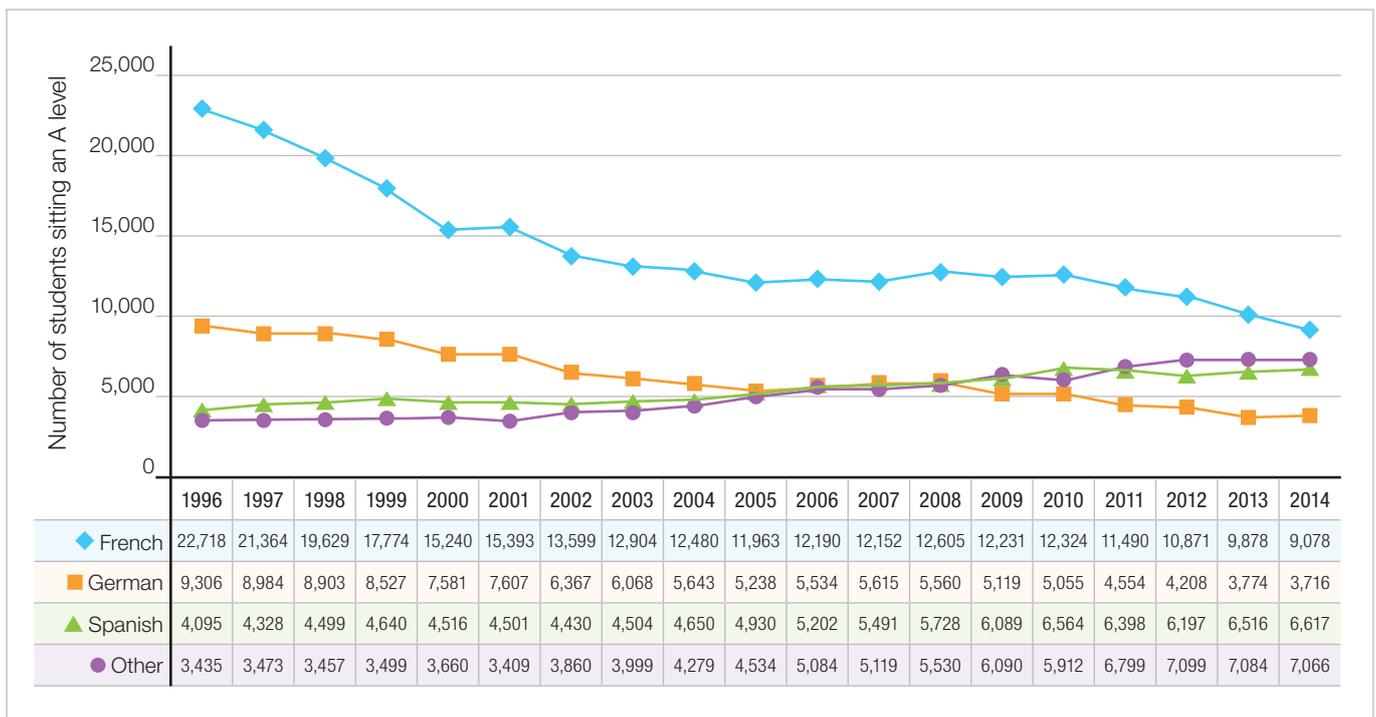
### 3.2 | A level

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

Over the 18 years from 1996 to 2014, entries for French and German have declined by 60 per cent, while in the same period entries for Spanish have increased by 62 per cent and entries for other languages more than doubled. However, since French and German started the period with much higher numbers of entries than Spanish and other languages, the impact overall on language entries is of a 28 per cent decline.

Recent falls in French and German have been particularly severe: nine and ten per cent respectively between 2012 and 2013, followed by an eight per cent decline for French and a further two per cent decline for German between 2013 and 2014. Other languages have been holding steady in the past two years, while Spanish continues to grow slowly.

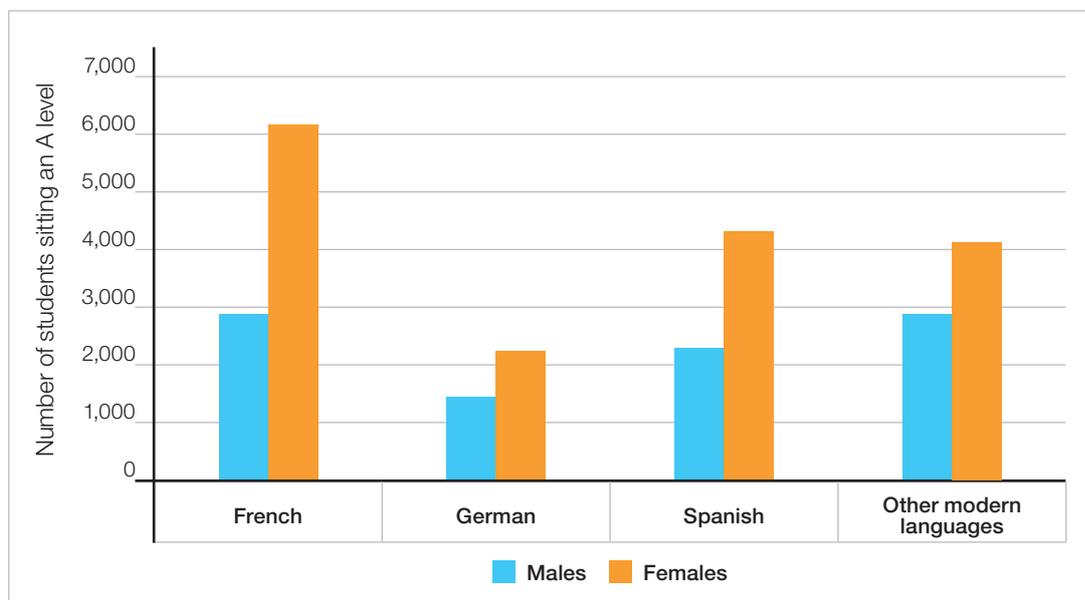
**Figure 8:** Entries for A level examinations in languages, 16–18 year olds, England, 1996–2014



#### By gender

Female candidates for A level languages outnumber males by nearly two to one (64 per cent of entries are from girls and 36 per cent from boys). This pattern is most marked in French, where 68 per cent of entries come from female candidates, less marked in German (60 per cent female entries) and least marked in the category 'Other modern languages' (59 per cent female entries). The breakdown of other languages provided by the DfE shows that Chinese and Russian are the least gender-biased languages at A level, with females accounting for 55 per cent and 56 per cent of entries respectively.

**Figure 9:** Entries for languages A levels at 16–18, by gender, 2014



**Has the tendency towards gender bias been increasing, or has it always been skewed?**

In the mid-sixties, the ratio of female to male candidates for languages was much more balanced, with only a small gender bias towards girls.<sup>38</sup> However, this was in a context in which entries from boys across all subjects at A level outnumbered those from girls by two to one. As the balance of overall entries for A level started to tilt towards girls, so the proportion of language entries also became more skewed towards girls, reaching its highest point in 1985 when girls accounted for 72 per cent of A level language entries. Since then the balance has settled at around 2 : 1 in favour of girls.

**Table 4:** Ratio of A level candidates by gender, 1965–2014

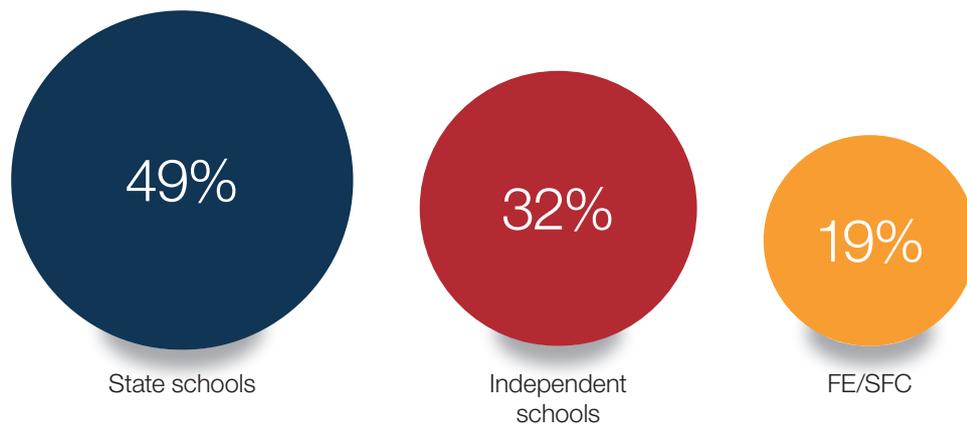
Year	Ratio of female/male candidates for languages A level
1965	54:46
1975	66:34
1985	72:28
1995	69:31
2005	65:35
2010	64:36
2014	64:36

<sup>38</sup> Data for the period 1965–1995 quoted in Hawkins (1996)

### By type of institution

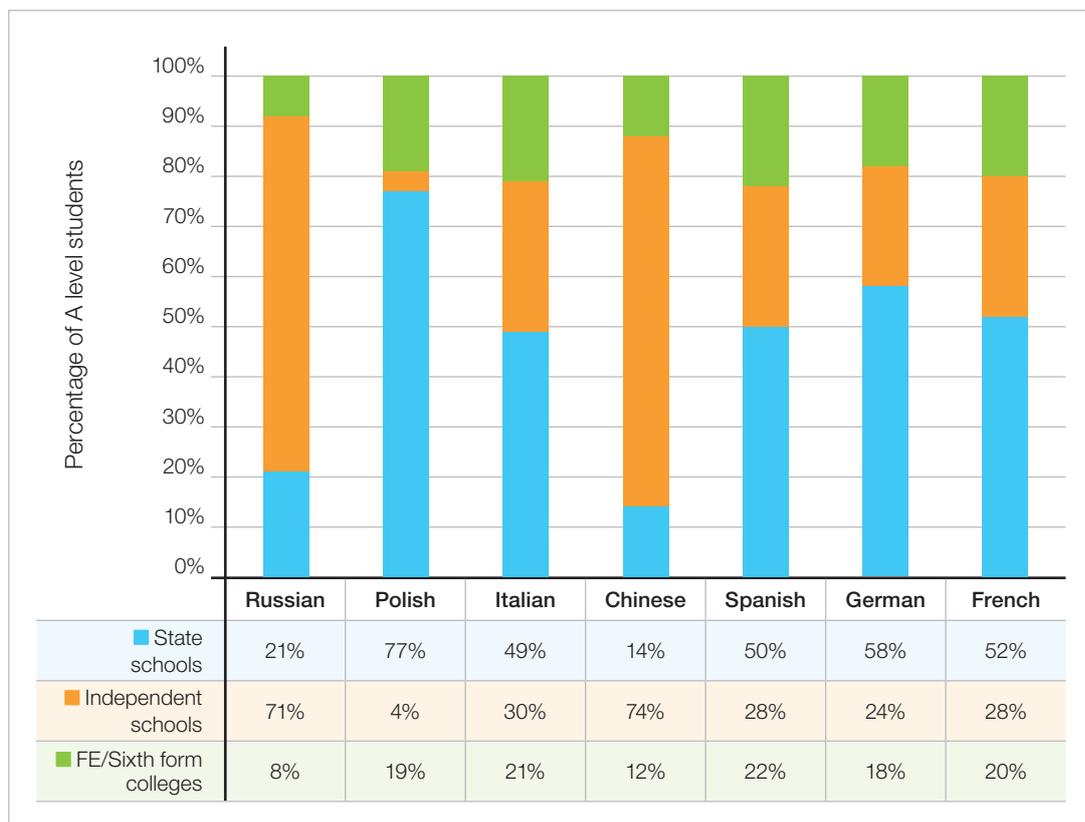
Fewer than half of A level language entries from 16–18 year olds come from state schools. Around one third come from the independent sector and 19 per cent from further education colleges and sixth form colleges. These proportions have not changed since 2013.

**Figure 10:** Entries for languages A levels at 16–18, type of institution, 2014



However, analysis of institution type against A level entries for specific languages shows some variations in this overall pattern. A higher-than-average proportion of French and German entries come from state schools – 52 and 58 per cent respectively, while the independent sector supplies only 28 per cent of French A level entries and 24 per cent of German entries. Chinese and Russian entries are heavily skewed towards the independent sector, with 74 per cent of entries for Chinese and 71 per cent of entries for Russian coming from independent schools. In the case of Polish, the pattern is reversed, with only four per cent of Polish entries coming from independent schools and 77 per cent from state schools.

**Figure 11:** Proportion of entries for different languages at A level, by type of institution, 2014



### Entries by region

In England as a whole, entries for languages A levels make up 3.6 per cent of entries in all subjects across both the state and independent sectors. However, in the state sector alone this proportion only represents 2.8 per cent of the total number of entries. An analysis of state sector entries by region shows that in all regions except London, the South East and the South West, the proportion of language entries to all entries is lower than average. In the South East and South West, the proportion of language entries to all entries is 2.9 per cent, just slightly above average. However, it is in London where entries for languages at A level are at their highest – five per cent of all entries in Inner London and 3.6 per cent in Outer London.

Table 5: A level entries by region, 2014

Region	Number of A level entries from 16–18 year olds in state schools						Percentage of entries that are a language	Percentage of entries that are French, German or Spanish
	French	German	Spanish	Other languages	All languages	All subjects		
North East	277	98	134	87	596	24,132	2.5%	2.1%
North West	738	327	743	280	2,088	88,171	2.4%	2.1%
Yorkshire and the Humber	543	229	434	259	1,465	57,320	2.6%	2.1%
East Midlands	478	222	255	294	1,249	50,401	2.5%	1.9%
West Midlands	618	293	310	356	1,577	63,265	2.5%	1.9%
East of England	774	374	426	308	1,882	74,265	2.5%	2.1%
London	1,098	440	988	1,497	4,023	101,159	4%	2.5%
South East	1,337	552	965	580	3,434	116,414	2.9%	2.5%
South West	684	280	487	248	1,699	59,262	2.9%	2.4%
Inner London	372	92	469	517	1,450	29,287	5%	3.2%
Outer London	726	348	519	980	2,573	71,872	3.6%	2.2%
<b>England</b>	<b>6,547</b>	<b>2,815</b>	<b>4,742</b>	<b>3,909</b>	<b>18,013</b>	<b>634,389</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>2.2%</b>

As can be seen from the table above, a high proportion – more than a third – of London’s A level language entries are ‘Other languages’ but entries for French, German and Spanish from London schools are also higher than average as a ratio of all subject entries. This may suggest that an appreciation of the value of other languages among London’s multilingual population is impacting on take-up for all languages, not simply those most commonly thought of as ‘community languages’.

# 4

## Language teaching in primary schools

English primary schools were first surveyed for the annual Language Trends report in 2012, when the government announced that languages were to become a statutory part of the Key Stage 2 curriculum from the beginning of the 2014 academic year. In this way it was possible to track primary schools as they prepared to implement this policy. This chapter assesses the impact of this major policy initiative from the first moment of implementation and examines the successes as well as the challenges faced by schools and teachers across the country. It includes two case studies which illustrate successful practice in the teaching of new languages in schools with highly multilingual school populations.

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

### 4.1 | Extent of provision

#### What proportion of primary schools now teach a modern language?

All but four of the 648 responding schools (see the following explanation of this) say that they now teach a foreign language as part of their Key Stage 2 curriculum and more than half (51 per cent) have been teaching languages to primary-phase pupils for more than five years. The very high proportion of positive responses (99 per cent) shows an increase on the 95 and 97 per cents recorded in 2013 and 2012 respectively. As in previous years, however, it is possible that this may overestimate the actual situation in schools, since those not teaching a language are less likely to respond, particularly in a situation where languages are now a statutory requirement.

Almost all schools (95 per cent) say they are teaching at least one language *both* in Years 3 and 4 *and* in Years 5 and 6. However, this does not necessarily mean that pupils receive language teaching throughout the four years of Key Stage 2.

Most comments, of which only a few examples are provided below, indicate that schools have formalised or strengthened existing provision in response to the introduction of compulsory language teaching:

*'For all Key Stage 2 we have just started this term. We did have some language teaching sporadically in Year 6 through links with a local secondary school.'*

*'We are attempting to be more rigorous in assessment and that the lessons actually occur.'*

*'French has been taught for many years across the school, however, up until last year the delivery was not always consistent/progressive for each year group/classes.'*

#### Why are some schools not teaching a language?

Of the four schools which are not teaching a language, all have done so in the past but have stopped doing so. One of these welcomes statutory status for languages and is preparing to introduce language teaching to all age groups but says 'staff knowledge, skill level and confidence is a barrier'. The other three do not support the introduction of compulsory language learning and do not teach a language either because of lack of external support and resources or because of other curriculum priorities. One is an academy which is not required to follow the national curriculum. One of the

others, a community school in the South West which offers language learning as an extra lunchtime or after-school activity, commented:

*'There is so much and with increased demands on English and maths we want our children to be successful learners in this.'*

### **What proportion of schools teach a language at Key Stage 1?**

Nearly half of responding schools (49 per cent) are also teaching a language at Key Stage 1. However, this is a slightly smaller proportion than in the 2013 survey when 53 per cent of respondents said they were teaching a language at Key Stage 1. Comments show that in some cases language provision at Key Stage 1 is well established, and that some schools begin even earlier in Reception or the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS):

*'We also teach Key Stage 1, Year 2 children French as part of their cross-curricular learning.'*

*'We teach languages from Reception onwards and have done so for about seven years.'*

*'French has been taught in the school to Key Stage 2 children for more than 10 years and to Key Stage 1 children for the past four years.'*

### **When did schools start to teach a modern language in the curriculum?**

Some 76 respondents (12 per cent) report that they began teaching a new language as part of the curriculum in September 2014. This figure appears to contradict Language Trends findings from previous years which showed that more than 90 per cent of schools were already teaching a language. However, free text comments clarify that in many cases what was previously informal provision has now been upgraded and made more systematic:

*'Provision has been formalised with the introduction of a specialist teacher from September 14.'*

*'We have specialised in one language to meet the requirements of the new national curriculum, whereas we used to offer a 'taster' of Spanish and French over the course of Key Stage 2.'*

*'Time has been increased for Year 6 to allow for more regular written work. However, the time constraints on the other year groups' timetables means that they only get 30 minutes language learning a week.'*

There are also a number of examples of schools where teaching which had been discontinued during the period of uncertainty about the status of languages in the Key Stage 2 curriculum has now been reinstated:

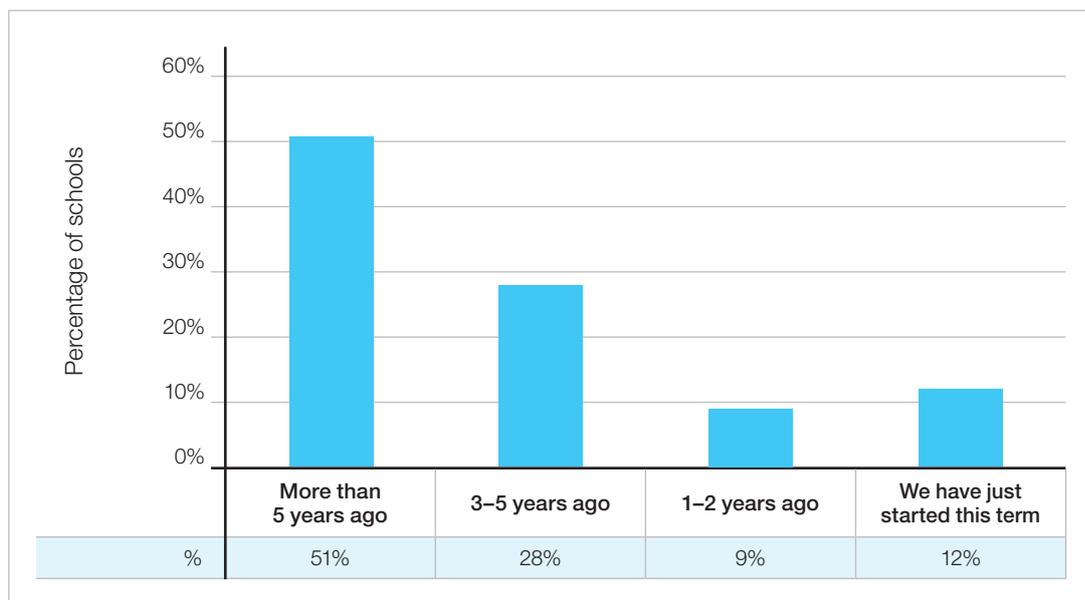
*'We taught French up to 2011 and have now started teaching it again this term.'*

*'We did teach French and Spanish until languages were taken out of the curriculum a few years ago.'*

*'It was also taught previously but stopped four years ago.'*

Both the quantitative and qualitative data indicate that the introduction of compulsory language teaching for pupils in Key Stage 2 has had an immediate impact on schools which were perhaps previously not fully committed to language teaching, or felt unable to offer it as a subject of study.

**Figure 12:** When schools started to teach a language in the curriculum



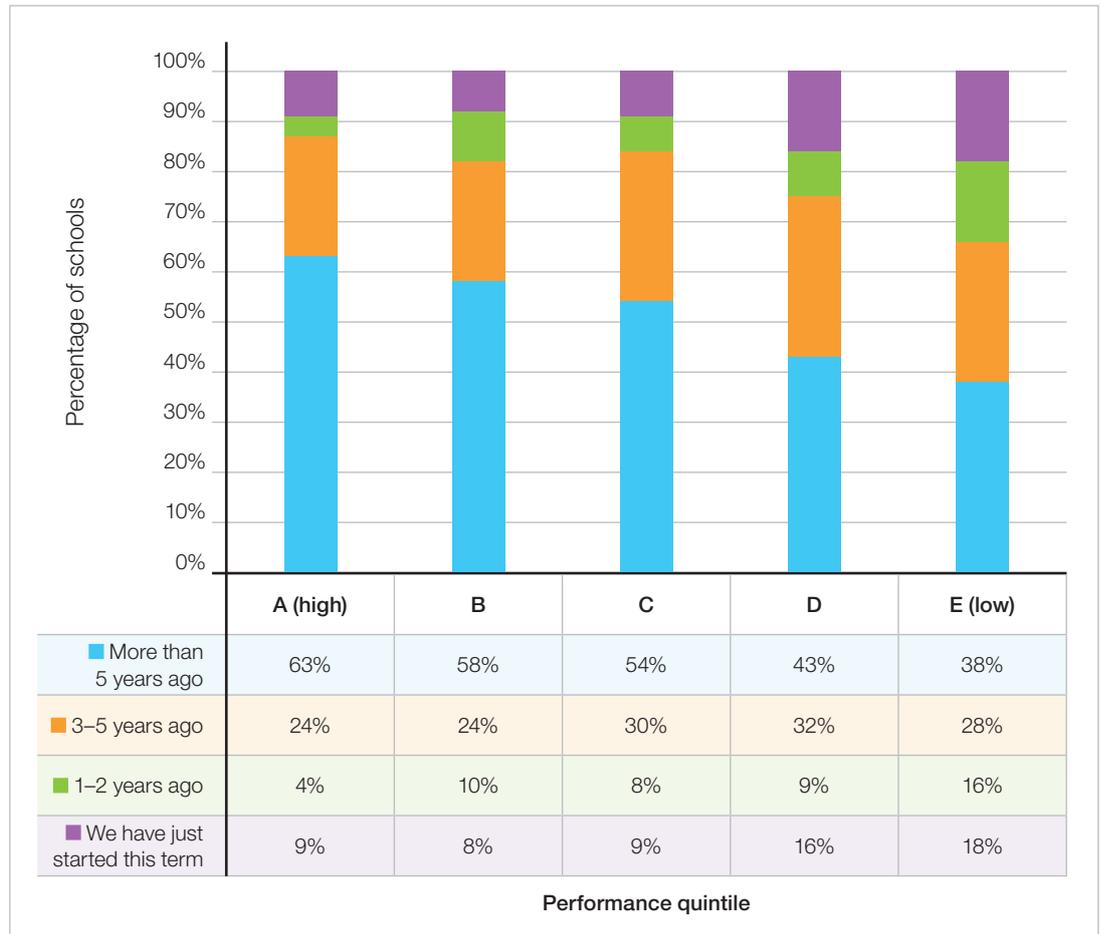
More than half of schools have experience of teaching a language stretching back more than five years. One respondent describes in some detail the substantial commitment their school has made to languages over the last decade:

*‘We began introducing languages as far back as 2005 and benefitted from a lot of support from Leeds local authority (free training, resources etc.) Our involvement in two Comenius projects since 2010 has helped languages develop at our school and given our pupils an understanding of the importance of language learning and practical application of skills. We now offer non-statutory languages in Key Stage 1, supported by one of our local high schools. This is working well and modelling approaches to staff ‘new’ to languages.’*

Schools which have been teaching a language for a relatively long period of time are more likely to be in the highest-performing quintile in terms of educational achievement, and those which only started in 2014 are more likely to be among those performing less well overall.<sup>39</sup>

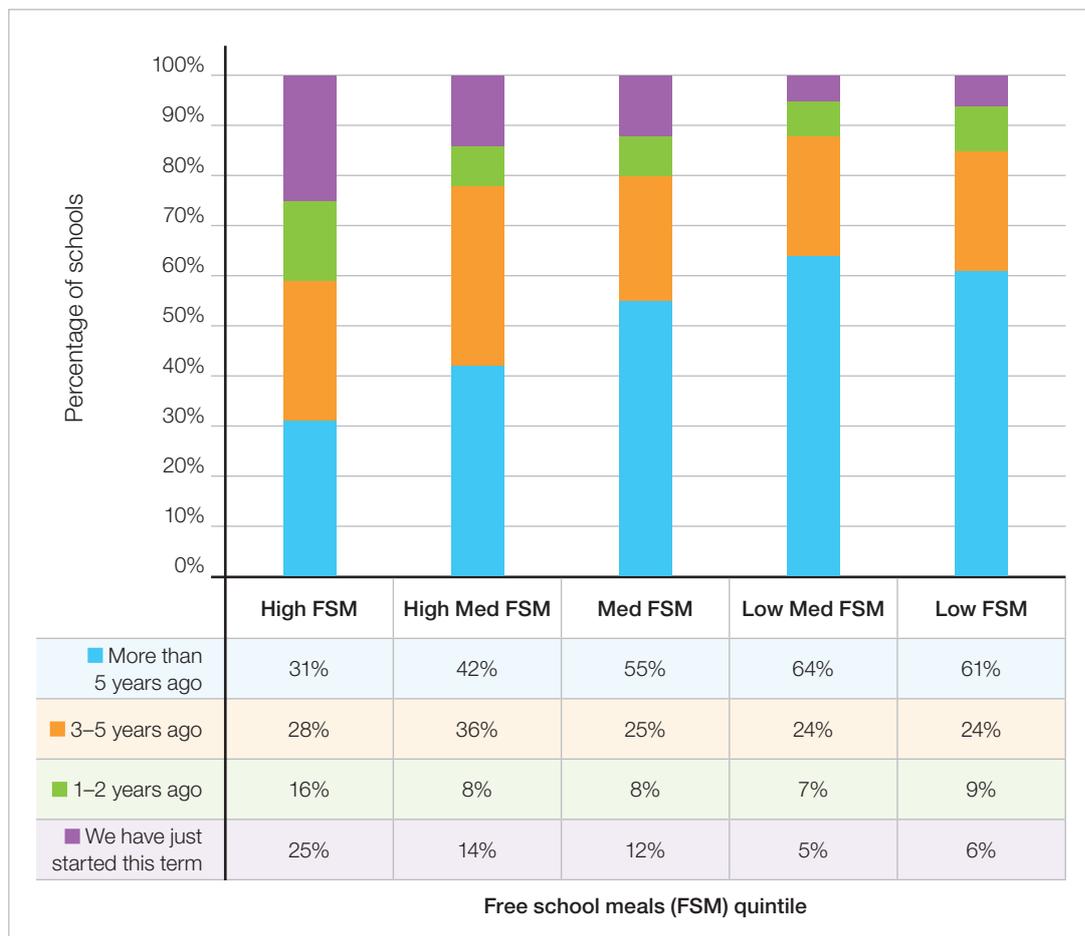
<sup>39</sup> Based on Key Stage 2 performance tables for 2013

Figure 13: When schools started to teach a language, by performance quintile



The length of time schools have been teaching a language also correlates with socio-economic indicators, based on the proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM). Schools with high proportions of children eligible for free school meals are more likely than those in more privileged circumstances to have only just started teaching a language in September 2014, whilst the majority of primary schools with average or below-average numbers of FSM pupils have been teaching a language for five years or more.

Figure 14: When schools started to teach a language, by socio-economic indicator



### Is provision inclusive of all pupils?

Where schools are teaching a language to a particular year group, in 96 per cent of cases this is to all pupils. However, some respondents do report that small numbers of pupils are being excluded from language lessons at some point in Key Stage 2 for extra literacy, numeracy or English as an Additional Language:

*'Approximately 10 per cent of Year 3 do not receive language teaching because they are new to learning English and it was felt that was a priority for them at this time.'*

*'Children requiring extra support in numeracy or literacy may be taken out of lessons but no pupil misses all language lessons.'*

*'In Year 6, 85 per cent [study a language] – a booster in Speech, Language and Communication is considered the priority.'*

*'Only about five per cent if that, may be taken out. These could be EAL children or children who need intervention with literacy/numeracy.'*

These comments are at odds with the evidence from case study schools in which both teachers and managers highlight the benefits of learning a new language for literacy in English, and the positive impact for pupils who are new to English of learning a subject in which their existing bilingualism gives them a rare advantage over their peers. One respondent comments on the impact that withdrawing pupils from language lessons has on the consistency and quality of teaching:

*‘Our fears are that it might be difficult to track this progress given that not all children receive consistent language teaching due to other interventions, and foresee that the expectations in reading and writing that the curriculum outlines to be the biggest challenge to achieve.’*

#### 4.2 | Time allocation

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

Of those schools teaching a language at Key Stage 1, more than half (54 per cent) do so for less than 30 minutes per week.

At Key Stage 2, the majority of schools teaching in a language in Years 3 and 4 do so for between 30 and 45 minutes per week. In Years 5 and 6, a higher proportion of schools (47 per cent, compared to 38 per cent who do not) offer more than 45 minutes. However, some schools report that they reduce language tuition in Year 6 until after the SATs exams:

*‘The Year 6s are not currently receiving French lessons, but will do in the summer term once their SATs are over.’*

A minority of schools are offering a substantial amount of teaching – between one and two hours per week, in line with more usual patterns of provision for foreign languages in other countries.<sup>40</sup> For example:

*‘We are now coming up to 10 years of specialist teaching, one hour per week, per class. The teacher is directly employed by the school, not shared with any other setting.’*

Three schools in this year’s sample offer more than two hours. These findings are very similar to those noted in previous years; however, at the margins, fewer schools are now teaching a language for less than 30 minutes per week and more are teaching a language for at least one hour per week. This is another indicator of the positive impact that the new compulsory status of languages in the primary curriculum has had.

**Table 6:** Time allocation for teaching languages

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

<sup>40</sup> For example, in France a modern language is taught for an hour and a half per week throughout the five years of primary education (Tinsley and Comfort, 2012)

### 4.3 | Response to the new national curriculum

#### What changes, if any, are schools making to language teaching provision in order to meet the requirements of the new national curriculum?

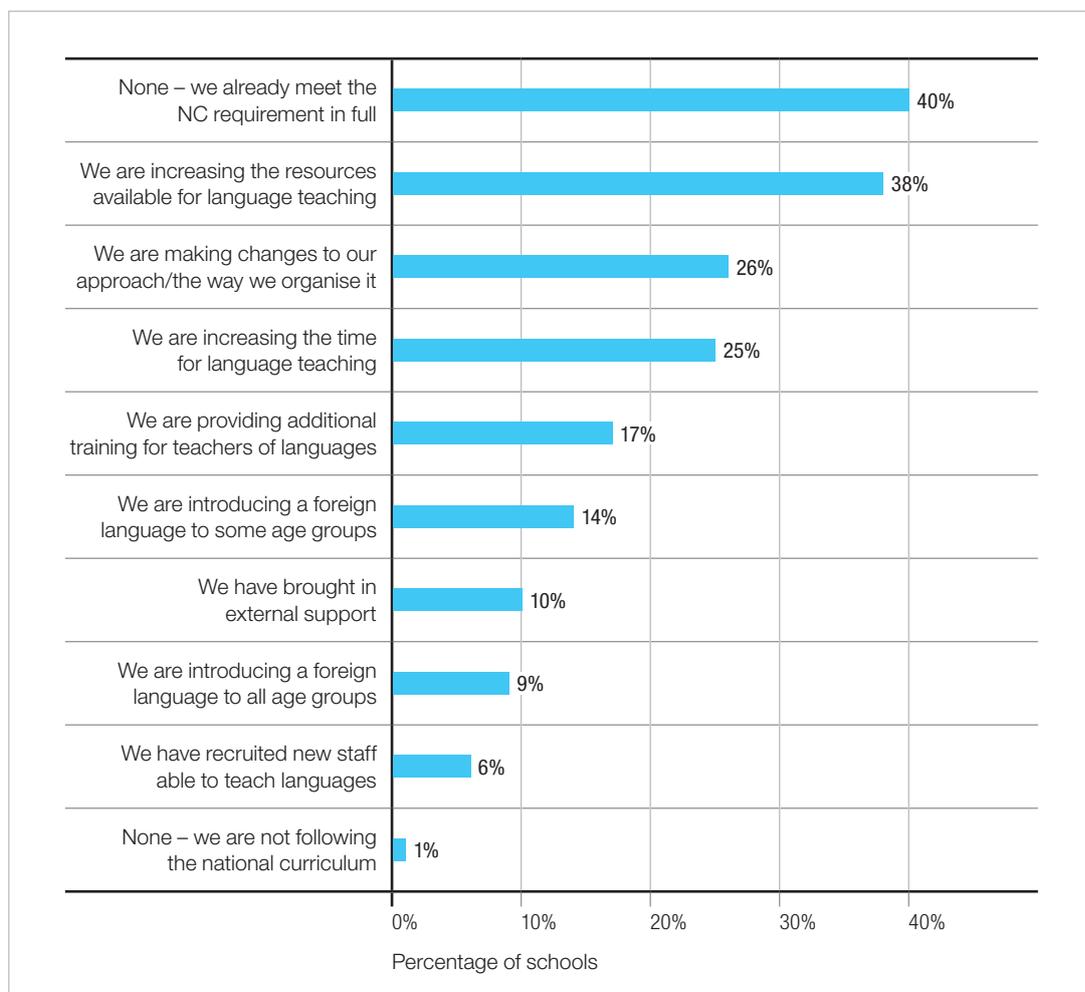
Forty per cent of responding primary schools – a similar proportion to that noted in last year’s survey – say they are already meeting the new national curriculum requirement in full and are therefore not making any further changes to language provision in their school<sup>41</sup> – and only six schools in this year’s sample say that they are not following the national curriculum at all. One school comments:

*‘As an academy we are not expected to follow the new national curriculum. However, we have taught Spanish for a number of years and will continue to do so. As it is delivered by non-specialists, we will have the ongoing issue of trying to ensure high quality delivery.’*

A total of 38 per cent of schools report that they are increasing the resources available for language teaching and others are making changes to the approach or organisation of language teaching in their school, and/or to the time available. However, only 17 per cent say they are providing additional training for teachers of languages. This appears low in view of findings set out in section 4.6 below in relation to the need to boost teacher confidence and language proficiency.

<sup>41</sup> Although teachers say their school is ‘meeting the national curriculum requirement in full’ we do not know what they understand by this. It is possible that some schools who are not making any changes, but do not necessarily meet the requirement in full, ticked this box because there was no other option. Correlation with other survey responses shows that a small number of schools (15) who ticked this box do not teach at least one language in both Years 3 and 4 and in Years 5 and 6.

**Figure 15:** Changes schools are making to language provision in order to meet the requirements of the new national curriculum\*



\*Multiple responses permitted

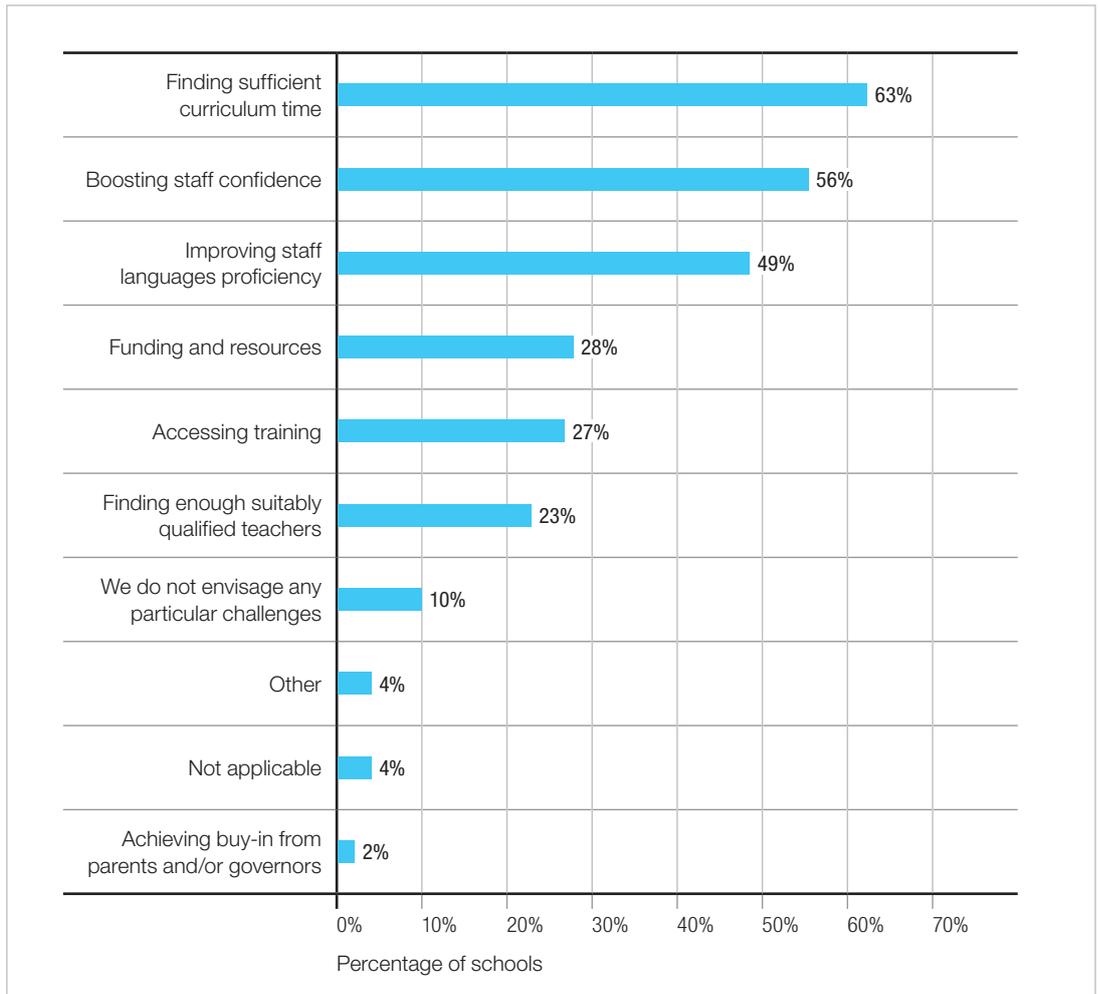
Respondents' comments on changes introduced, indicating that schools are developing more formal approaches, include the following:

*'German has been taught informally in Key Stage 2 for a number of years, but this year we have engaged a specialist German teacher in response to the demands of the new curriculum.'*

*'Learning the conjugation of verbs has been added to the planning, so that the children begin to learn 1st, 2nd, 3rd person singular, present tense for the 10 most common verbs.'*

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

**Figure 16:** Challenges reported by schools in meeting the national curriculum requirement to teach a modern or ancient language\*



\*Multiple responses permitted

Nearly two thirds of schools (63 per cent) say that finding curriculum time for languages is a challenge in meeting the national curriculum requirements. This has increased from 50 per cent in 2013/14 and shows that this is a key issue for schools. The ranking of the various issues listed in the chart above is exactly the same as it was in the 2013/14 survey – with negligible difficulties reported regarding the attitudes of parents and/or governors. In their free comments, respondents describe the main challenges in implementing the new policy which are of concern to them. These fall mainly into three categories:

- Teacher confidence and linguistic competence

*'A particular challenge is boosting the confidence and knowledge of staff who don't teach languages to use them 'cross-curricularly.'*

*'Up until this academic year... I had been expected to deliver French to Years 5/6 pupils. I have never been taught French – an afternoon's CPD did not equip me to provide a quality experience for my class.'*

- Assessing pupil progression

*'Meeting the challenge of assessment without levels. Ensuring progress and monitoring and tracking progress without levels.'*

*'We are able to allocate enough time to teaching, but enough time for assessment is a challenge. 40 minutes per week is really insufficient.'*

- Transition between key stages (between Key Stage 1 and 2 as well as from Key Stage 2 to 3)

*'Our main challenge is in realising our vision of being able to ensure that all pupils can converse in a MFL with confidence by the time they leave to go to secondary school. There are so many time pressures and demands.'*

*'To provide effective transition into Year 3 and effective transition into Year 7.'*

Comments on other issues provided by respondents include the following:

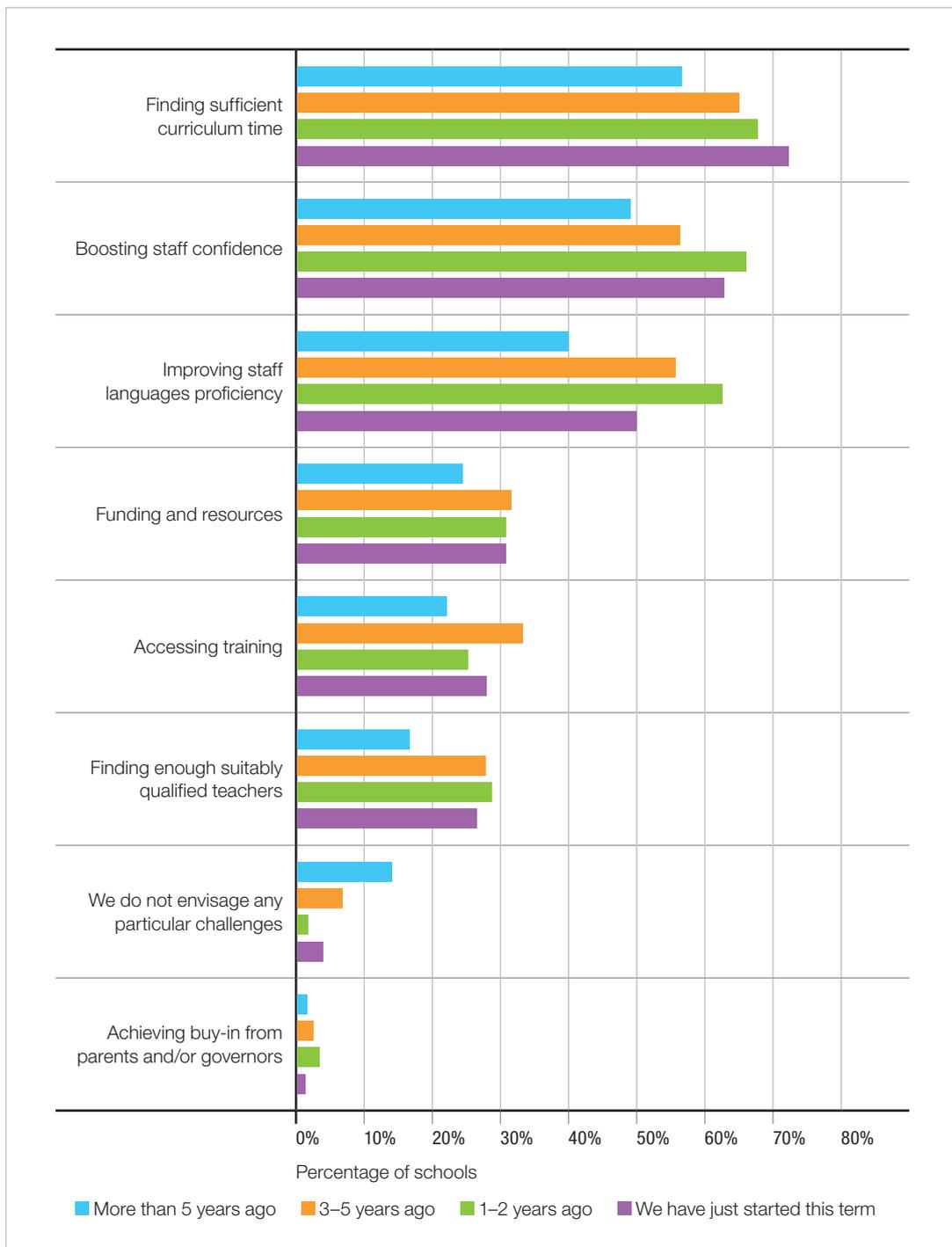
*'Funding is always tight in our school and resources are key to enriching children's experiences. Having access to quality websites with French texts, poetry and songs would be very beneficial.'*

*'The MFL leaders from [the local council] were made redundant a few years ago, so now we have no local training days or courses to go on. The CILT courses no longer exist – they used to be amazing.'*

#### **What challenges do schools new to teaching a language experience most?**

For schools which have just started teaching a language from September 2014, finding sufficient curriculum time tends to be a more common challenge than for schools which have already been teaching the language; while schools which have been teaching a language for just one or two years are the most likely to report challenges in relation to staff proficiency and confidence. Schools which started teaching three to five years ago are those most likely to find accessing training an issue. This is perhaps because they started to teach a language just at the point where centrally-resourced training was being cut.

**Figure 17:** Challenges reported by schools in meeting the national curriculum requirement, by length of time teaching languages\*



\*Multiple responses permitted

### Do schools welcome statutory status for languages at Key Stage 2?

Nearly nine out of ten schools (87 per cent) taking part in this year's survey welcome statutory status for languages in Key Stage 2, a proportion which is very slightly higher than that noted in previous surveys. Respondents highlight the benefits that learning another language brings to primary-age children:

*'I believe it is vitally important for languages to be taught within Key Stage 2, primary level. They are so keen to learn a new language and it can be helpful in their own understanding of the English language. The cultural aspect is also vital as we need to build our pupils to be global citizens.'*

*'We believe it broadens our students' knowledge of the multicultural society in which we live and reinforces the need for respect and understanding of other cultures. It improves their communication skills and confidence. It also helps to reinforce learning in other parts of the curriculum e.g. literacy, grammar, etc.'*

However, even while welcoming the introduction of languages into Key Stage 2 wholeheartedly, many also express a degree of reservation about the lack of support, guidance, training and especially funding:

*'We would hope that the kind of support and funding that was available two or more years ago would be available again. Without it we fear that the quality of teaching will not reach the standard we would like. Primary practitioners are masters of learning and passing on new skills, but they themselves need to be adequately supported to do so.'*

*'Now that it is a statutory requirement there needs to be more schemes of work and support available to ensure that schools can meet the needs and expectations set out by the new curriculum. Not all schools are set up and ready, and with such little guidance and direction there will always be a degree of uncertainty and lack of clarity as to what is expected and how it is to be achieved.'*

Others say they are feeling positive about how language teaching is developing in their schools:

*'We are excited about the opportunity to teach languages in Key Stage 2 and are grateful that we have a language specialist in our staff already who is willing to do this. Our hopes are that the children will enjoy it and gain valuable skills which will also support their development in general literacy.'*

Those that do not welcome the measure are almost all supportive of the intention, but sceptical about the quality of teaching that can be provided in the absence of additional funding and suitably trained teachers, and above all in a crowded curriculum which can make it difficult to give pupils sufficient exposure to the language and to measure their progress in the subject:

*'My fears are the lack of support from authorities and government in enabling schools to put this into practice in a high quality manner rather than merely shoe-horned into an already overly full curriculum.'*

*'No training or additional funding has been given. An additional language is very important but there are no language specialists in my school. The quality of provision worries me but I have seen the introduction of French encourage and give pupils a new confidence, experience in communicating.'*

**Does the proportion of pupils in the school with English as an Additional Language impact on provision to learn new languages in the curriculum?**

The profile of responding schools is very similar to that of the base of all English primary schools in relation to the extent to which they have pupils with English as an Additional Language (see Appendix).

Respondents who comment on the impact of large proportions of children with English as an Additional Language in their schools mainly express the view that learning another language is not important or even possible for them until they have acquired good English:

*'We have a number of pupils who join us with no English. They are already having to learn a new language without adding an additional language. Once EAL children have the basic building blocks of the English language they cope well with French.'*

*'It is a challenge to teach another language when some of our children have not yet mastered English fluently.'*

Others feel that learning a new language is taking away time which would be better spent on home languages as well as English:

*'For our school all children have two or three languages and have English as a second language. They also learn Arabic at home. Another language, although enjoyable, is taking away from developing English as well as the understanding in their home language.'*

*'It is important to get them proficient in English and support their first language development, perhaps before introducing a MFL.'*

One respondent whose school is teaching French but where pupils speak 52 different languages including Lithuanian, Yoruba and Urdu as the most common, comments on the differential value attached to the former, and the higher levels which could be achieved by building on pupils' existing linguistic capacities:

*'There is a national "problem" with some languages being seen as "high status" and others as "low status". If we taught Lithuanian or Russian as our main language many of our pupils would be close to GCSE level at age 10.'*

#### 4.4 | Documentation, monitoring and assessment

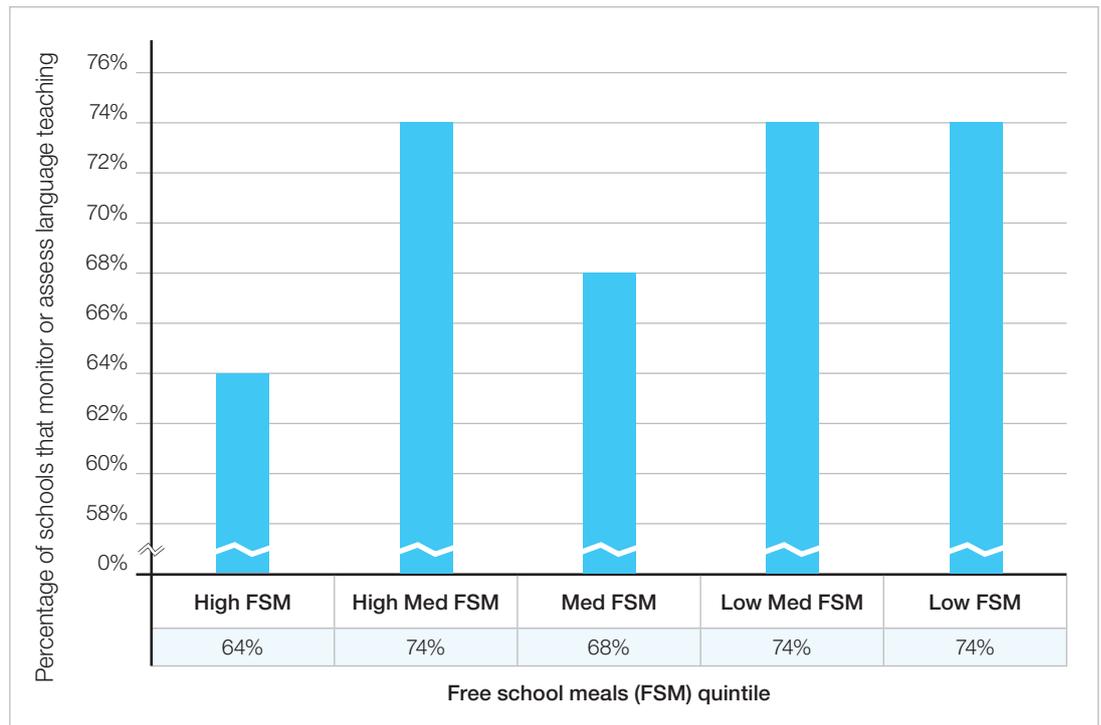
##### Do schools monitor or assess language teaching?

Some 27 per cent of primary schools say they do not monitor or assess pupil learning or progression. This compares with 33 per cent who said they did not in the 2012 and 2013 Language Trends surveys, an increase which reflects the finding noted above that the introduction of compulsory status has encouraged some schools to formalise their provision for languages.

Whether schools have systems for monitoring or assessing their language provision in place can be used as an indicator of the quality and consistency of the teaching they provide. The responses to this question have therefore been analysed according to the characteristics of schools concerned, in order to explore whether the quality of language teaching is related to a) the socio-economic status of pupils within the school or b) attainment at Key Stage 2 as measured by performance indicators.

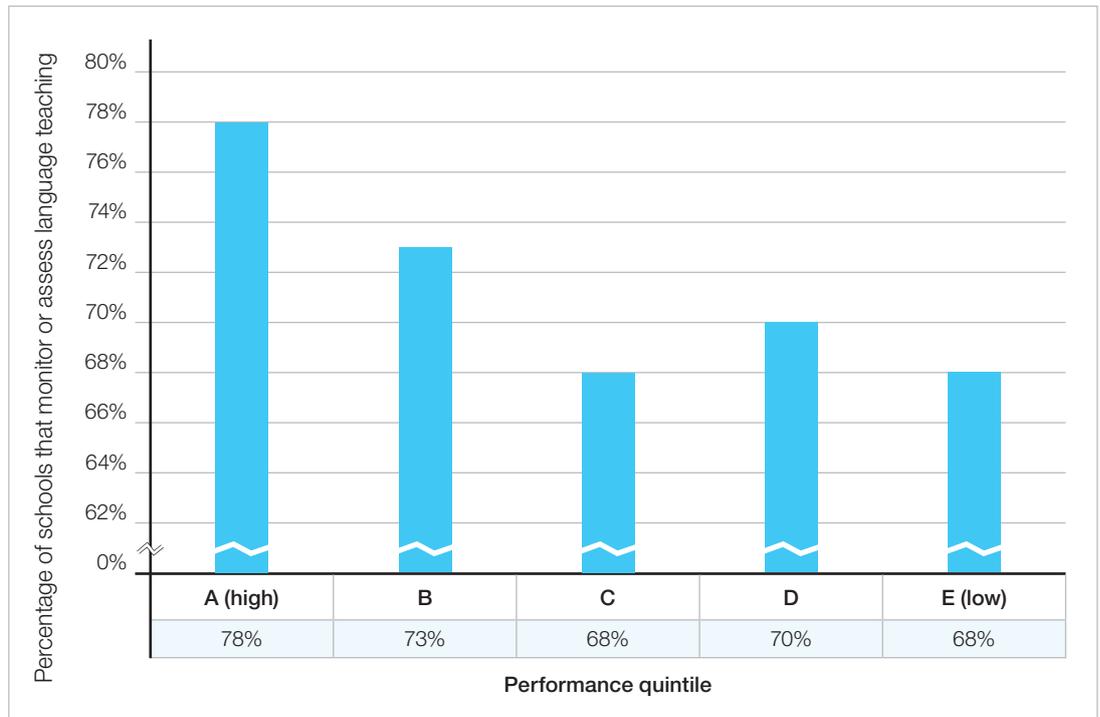
Schools with the highest levels of socio-economic disadvantage are least likely to monitor and assess pupils in languages, but otherwise there is not a strong correlation between socio-economic circumstances and the likelihood that schools will have in place systems to monitor or assess pupils.

**Figure 18:** Whether schools monitor or assess language teaching, by socio-economic indicator



However, as might be expected, there is a stronger correlation between whether schools are high-performing generally, and whether they monitor and/or assess pupil progress in languages. Those in the highest-performing bracket are most likely to monitor and/or assess languages, while those in the lowest-performing and average quintiles are least likely to do so.

Figure 19: Whether schools monitor or assess language teaching, by performance quintile



**How do schools monitor and assess language learning?**

A small majority of schools (57 per cent) say they use the Key Stage 2 Framework,<sup>42</sup> almost exactly the same proportion as did so in 2013. Some report that they are using the Languages Ladder or Asset Languages assessment materials, which are linked to the Framework (20 per cent and 15 per cent respectively in 2013). The proportion of schools using commercially-provided assessment materials has increased to nearly 15 per cent from eight per cent in 2013. The commercial assessment materials or sources of assessment materials most frequently mentioned by respondents in this year’s survey are Tout Le Monde, Youth Chinese Test, Niveau Bleu (Catherine Cheater), Asset Languages, The European Languages Portfolio, Rigolo, BEST Midlands Training, Janet Lloyd Network, Euro Schools, Languagenut and Chris Quigley Framework. A few schools also report that they are employing outside agencies to support them in monitoring and assessing their language learning.

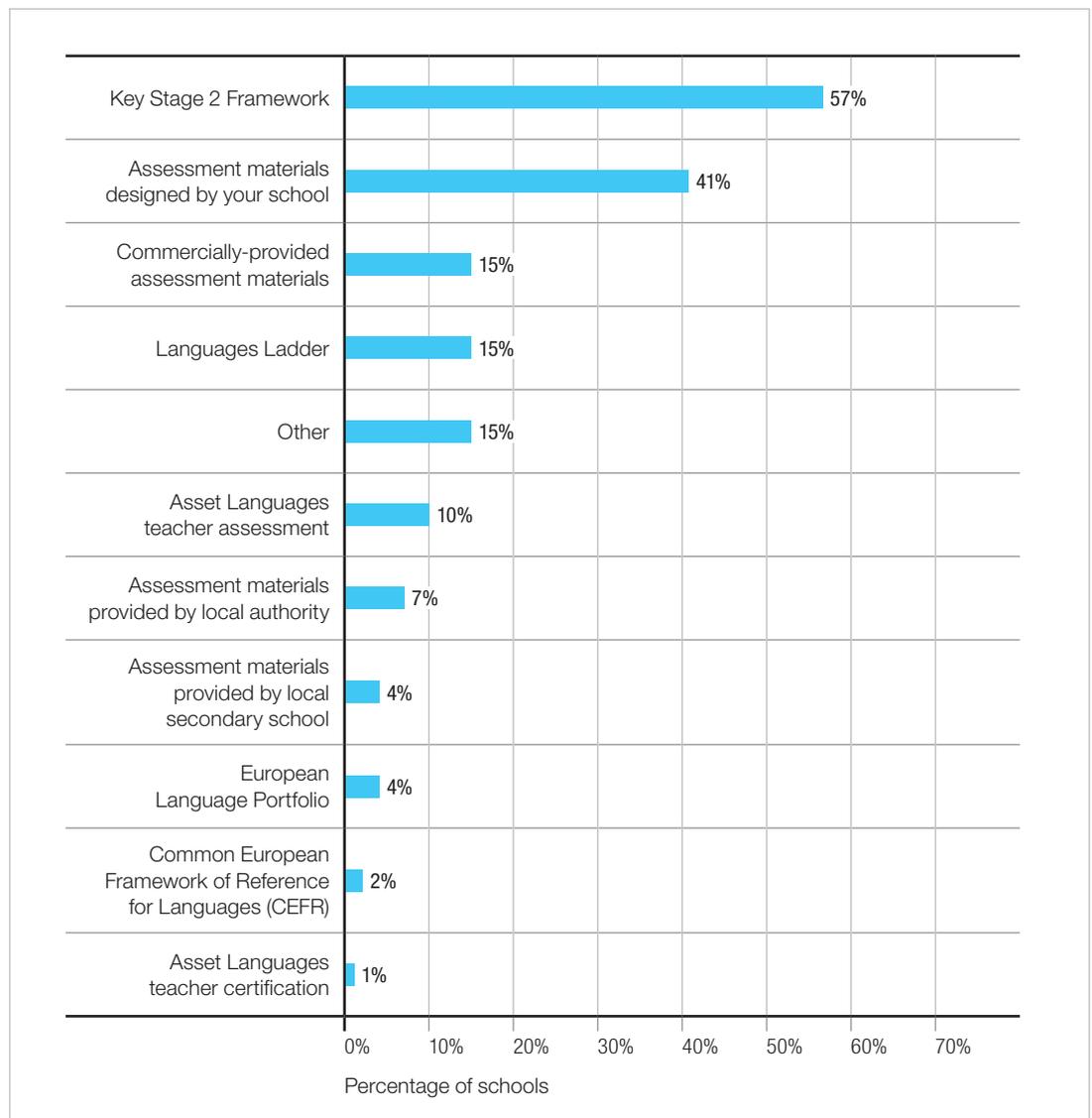
Only a very few primary schools are using materials provided by their local authority or their local secondary school:

*‘Assessment materials [are] designed through collaboration between local secondary school, our subject leader and one other primary teacher for use by all 17 feeder schools.’*

*‘Observations of French teaching [are] conducted by management staff, link governor, French coordinator and local authority.’*

<sup>42</sup> The Key Stage 2 Framework for Languages was published by the (then) DfES in 2005 as a core reference for teachers and curriculum managers in supporting the introduction of language learning in Key Stage 2 as envisaged in the National Languages Strategy of 2002. It is available online at <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFES%201721%202005>

Figure 20: Tools used for monitoring and assessing progress in language learning\*



\*Multiple responses permitted

Comments show that while many respondents have arrangements in place to monitor language learning, they are in the early stages of developing assessment systems and a small number are finding it a challenge to accommodate assessment into an already crowded curriculum:

*'We have only monitored the teaching of MFL in previous years, not assessed it.'*

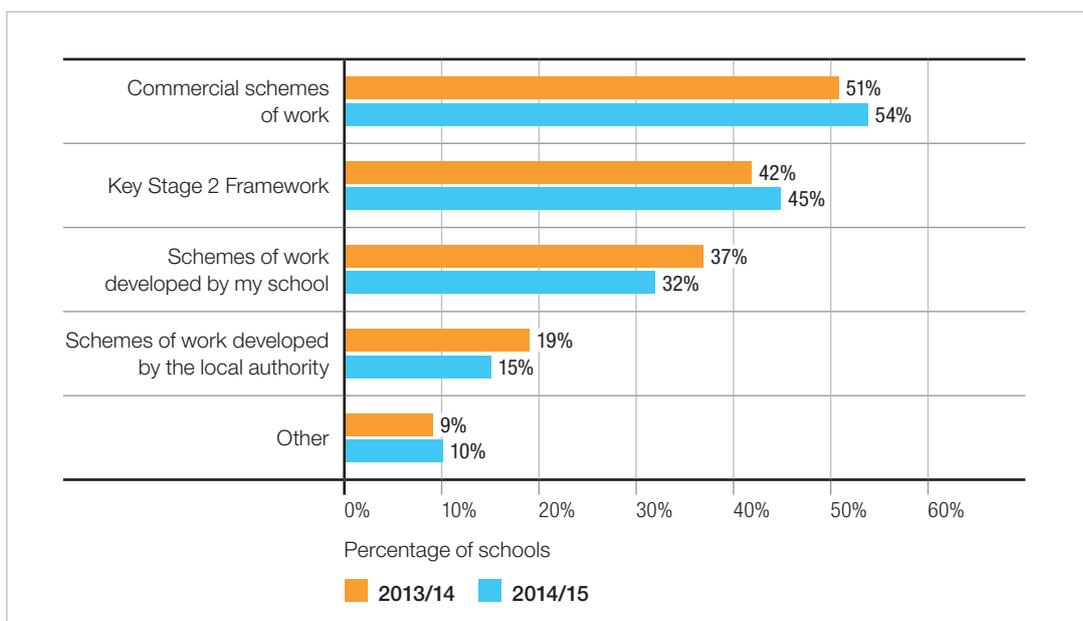
*'We are teaching children to the best of our ability without teachers who are able to speak French fluently or who are confident speaking French. We have no idea how to assess progress. The curriculum is overloaded and this does not reduce the workload.'*

### What documentation underpins schools' primary languages programmes?

Just over half of responding schools (54 per cent) are using commercially available products to structure and organise their primary languages programmes. Among their comments the most commonly-mentioned are Niveau Bleu (Catherine Cheater), Jolie Ronde, Janet Lloyd Network, Language Angels, Early Start French and schemes of work provided by BEST Midland Training, Euro Schools, the Goethe Institut and Liverpool Local Authority.

Others report that they have either developed their own programmes and resources or adapted QCA materials and a few report that they are using a programme developed in collaboration with a local secondary school. In comparison to responses in the 2013 survey, there has been a slight increase this year in the proportion of schools using commercial products and the Key Stage 2 Framework, and a slight decrease in the proportion using schemes of work developed by their school or local authority.

**Figure 21:** Documentation underpinning primary languages programmes, 2013/14 and 2014/15\*



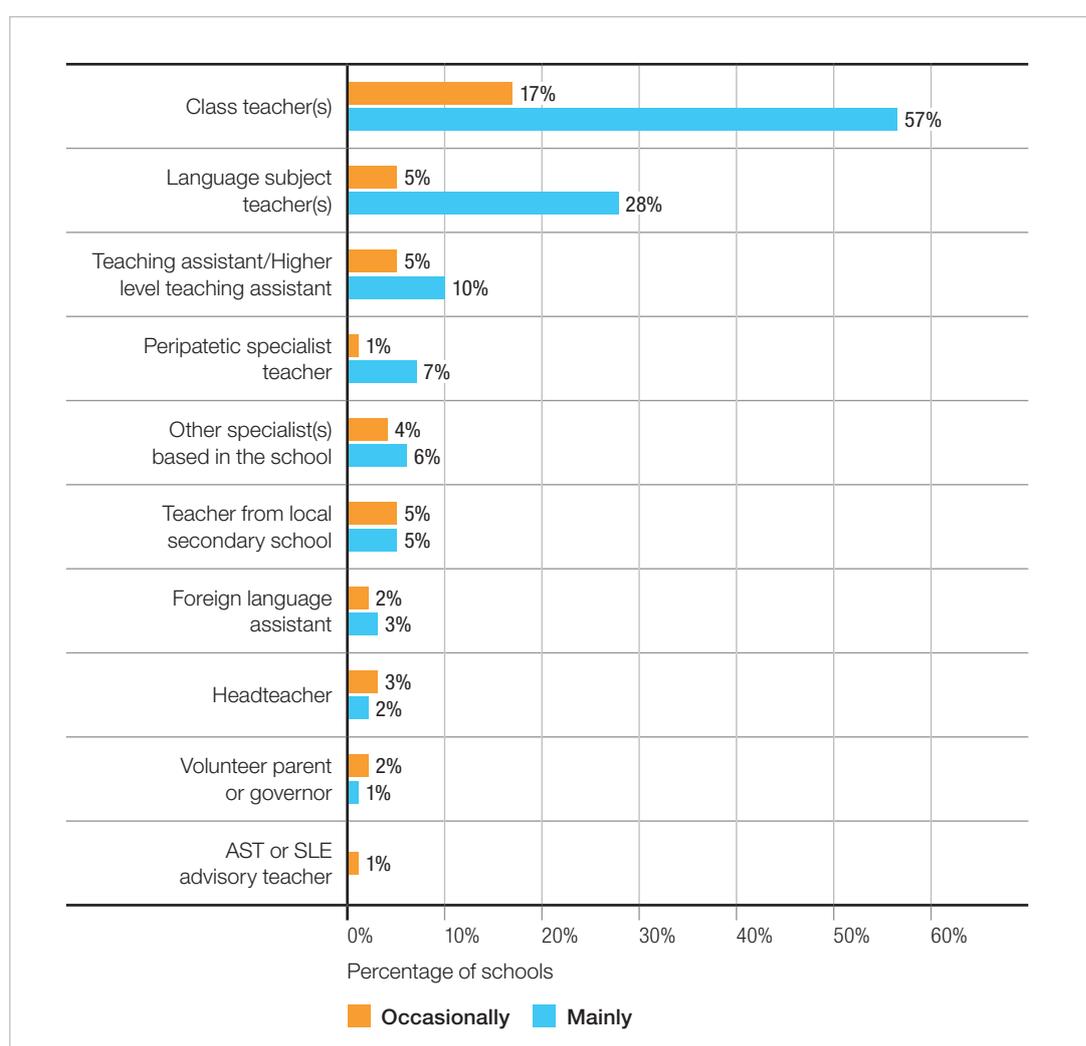
\*Multiple responses permitted

## 4.5 | Teachers' qualifications

### Who currently provides the teaching of languages?

Respondents were asked to identify the status of staff who mainly or occasionally provide languages instruction to pupils in Key Stage 2. The responses reveal that while primary class teachers bear the main responsibility for teaching the foreign language in the majority of schools, a wide variety of other individuals are also involved and practice varies from school to school.

**Figure 22:** Status of staff currently providing the teaching of languages



The figures shown in the chart above are very similar to those from previous years' responses, although comments indicate that the introduction of compulsory status has encouraged some schools to consider appointing specialist language teachers, or that they would like to do so if funding were available:

*'More curriculum time and funding for a specialist teacher throughout Key Stage 2 would benefit the children in making them secondary ready by the end of Year 6.'*

Both case study schools (see below) employ specialist teachers who lead language teaching within the school, with class teachers playing a supporting role. Another respondent comments positively on teaching arrangements in their school:

*'Staff learn alongside pupils and reinforce the learning on a daily basis between specialist lessons.'*

Qualitative data provided by respondents reveal the wide variety of different people supporting language teaching in primary schools:

*'One teacher delivers lessons, the class teachers are asked to do small amounts of follow-up work. The teacher is not a language specialist – just someone with O level French who is willing to have a go.'*

*'The Italian teacher is from the Italian Consulate and the Latin teacher is an Oxford University student.'*

*'Language specialist – formerly a MFL secondary teacher recruited specifically to deliver French at our primary school.'*

*'A governor runs the German group with a teacher after school.'*

The use of such a wide range of individuals demonstrates imagination and resourcefulness in bringing an experience of languages to young children. However, the responses suggest that in some cases this may be instead of rather than as enrichment to a structured and high-quality language teaching offer.

#### **Do any of the staff teaching languages have qualifications of GCSE level or above in the language they are teaching?**

Nine out of ten schools (89 per cent) say they have staff with at least a GCSE in the language they are teaching. However, the likelihood of schools having staff qualified to at least GCSE level varies from region to region. In the East Midlands, for example, nearly one in five schools does not have a member of staff qualified to a minimum of GCSE level in the languages they are teaching, whereas in the North East and the South East, only around one in twenty schools does not staff qualified to at least this level.

**Table 7:** Proportions of schools having staff with qualifications of GCSE level or above (or native speakers) in the languages they are teaching, by region.

	Yes		No	
	Number	%	Number	%
East Midlands	64	84%	12	16%
East of England	52	91%	5	9%
London	62	90%	7	10%
North East	39	95%	2	5%
North West	95	86%	15	14%
South East	73	94%	5	6%
South West	47	92%	4	8%
West Midlands	55	92%	5	8%
Yorkshire and the Humber	76	85%	13	15%
<b>England</b>	<b>563</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>11%</b>

The following quote sums up the reservations of a number of respondents in relation to the use of staff who are not qualified in the language they are teaching (see also the section above on whether schools welcome statutory status for languages in Key Stage 2):

*'I do think it is important to introduce a foreign language in primary schools. Unfortunately, when it is taught by class teachers who have no qualification in that language, it creates more damage than good.'*

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

The responses to this question highlight the disparity between schools in relation to the level of language competence they are able to draw on from among their staff. While 42 per cent of schools have on their staff either a native speaker or a teacher with a degree in the language they are teaching, nearly one third (31 per cent) of schools have no member of staff with a language qualification higher than a GCSE.

Specific information provided by respondents includes the following:

*'Qualified secondary language teacher.'*

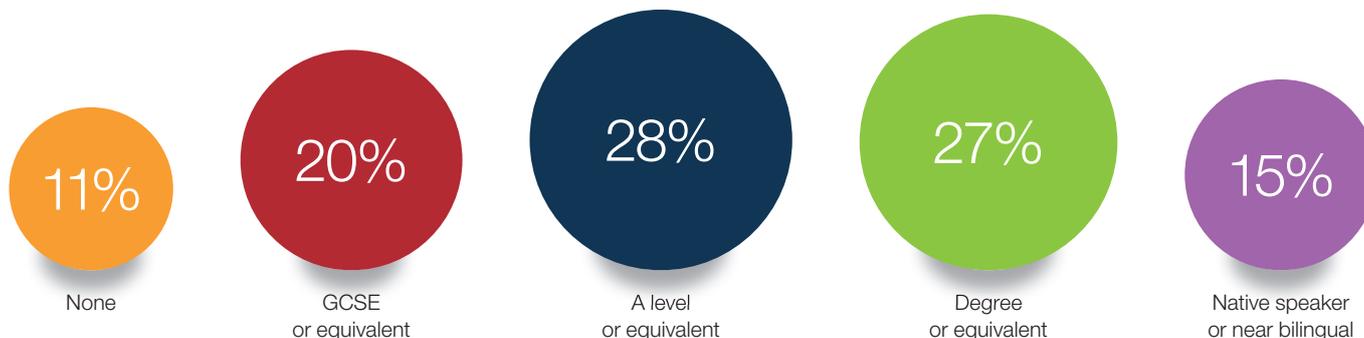
*'The teacher has an O level gained in 1978.'*

*'Our HLTA<sup>43</sup> that delivers most of the teaching is fluent in four languages.'*

*'Only two staff have GCSE in French. Everybody else has no formal qualification.'*

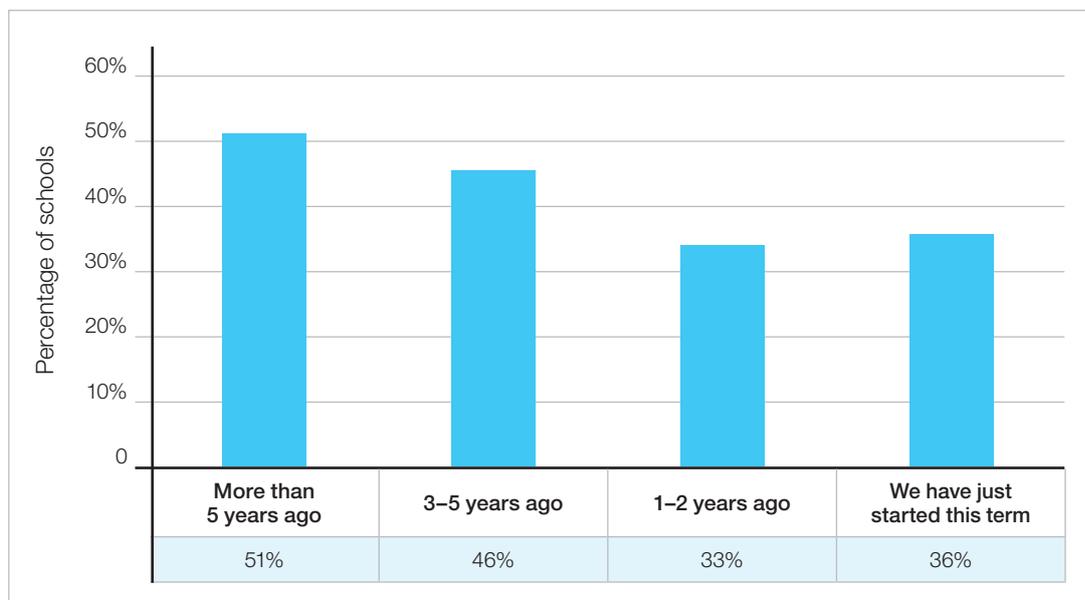
<sup>43</sup> Higher Level Teaching Assistant

**Figure 23:** Highest qualification held by teachers in responding schools



Schools which have been teaching a language for five years or more are more likely to have a member of staff who is a native speaker or has a degree in the language they are teaching (51 per cent) than schools which started only one or two years ago (33 per cent) or in September 2014 (36 per cent). The case studies at the end of this chapter provided two examples of long-standing native-speaker teachers who have enabled language teaching to become firmly embedded within the curriculum.

**Figure 24:** Percentage of schools with a member of staff who has a degree in or is a native speaker of the language he/she is teaching, by length of time the school has taught languages



### Do schools have a subject leader for languages?

Almost nine out of ten schools (88 per cent) have a nominated subject leader for languages, about the same proportion as in the 2013 survey, but up from the 79 per cent recorded in 2012.

However, many of the comments in relation to this question pointed out that the person designated as subject leader is also either the class teacher or the headteacher/deputy headteacher. In the majority of cases the nominated subject leader for languages also has a wide range of other responsibilities within the school, and is not necessarily a language specialist:

*'Key Stage 2 class teacher, Curriculum Innovator, link teacher, PTA link teacher, School Council, residential visits leader and subject leader for citizenship.'*

*'Key Stage 1 leader for literacy, library coordinator, Eco-committee organiser and gardening club organiser.'*

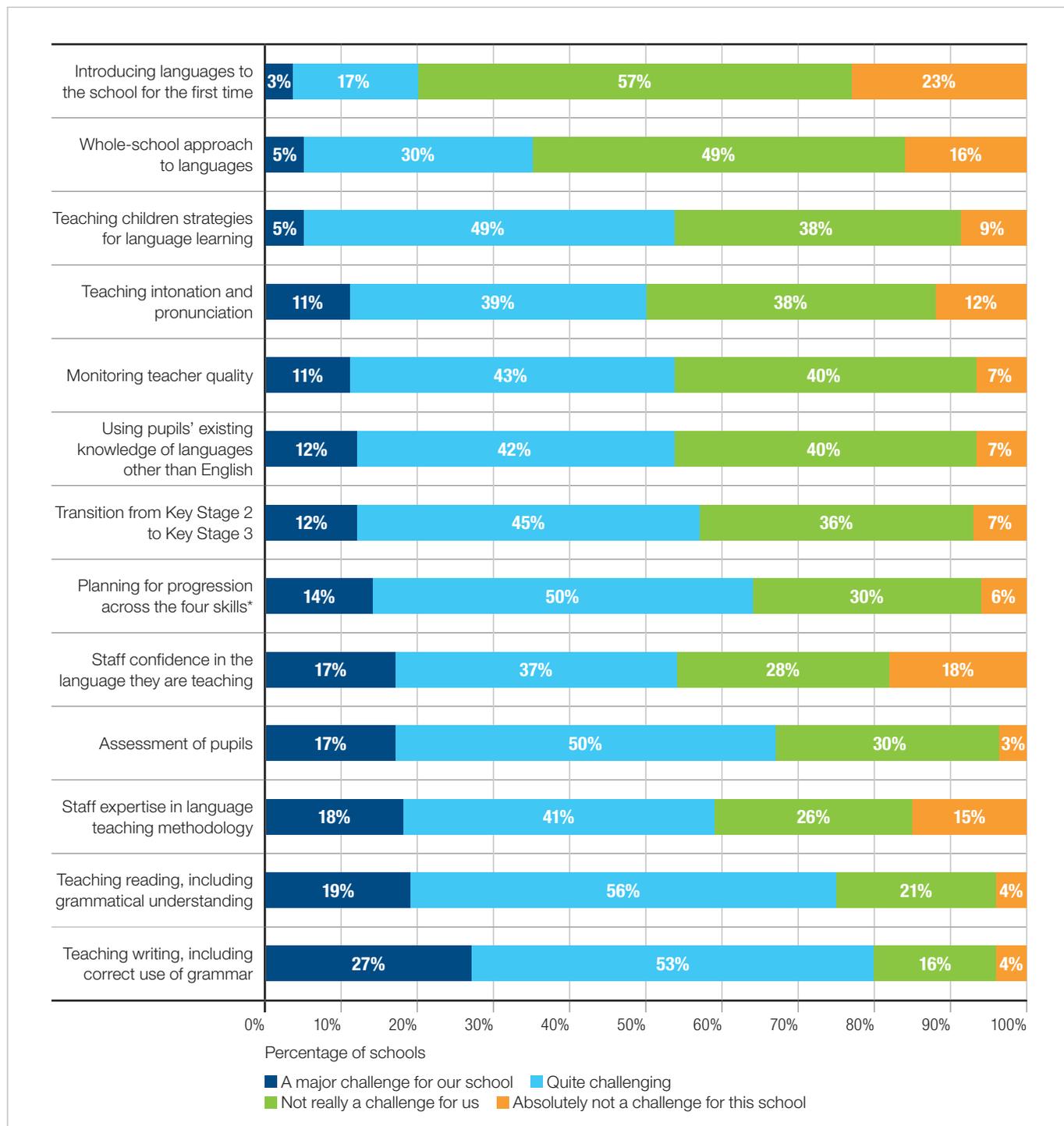
*'Teaching assistant, SENCO assistant, administration as well as subject leader.'*

### 4.6 | Strengths, challenges and continuing professional development (CPD)

Respondents were asked to rate a list of issues, derived from Ofsted reports and previous surveys, on a four-point scale according to whether they thought each issue was either a strength in their school or a challenge. Nearly a quarter of schools feel they have strengths in introducing languages to the school for the first time (23 per cent), while 16 per cent perceive themselves to be strong in adopting a whole-school approach to teaching languages. Eighteen per cent report that their staff confidence is a strength in their school.

The issues most frequently identified by respondents as challenges are the teaching of reading, writing and grammar in a language as well as assessment, staff expertise and staff confidence. A total of four out of five schools rate the teaching of writing in a language, including the correct use of grammar, as either 'a major challenge' (27 per cent) or 'quite challenging' (53 per cent). Linked to this, the teaching of reading, including grammatical understanding, is seen to be 'a major challenge' by one in five schools (19 per cent) and 'quite challenging' by more than half of the remaining schools (53 per cent). Assessment of pupils, staff expertise and staff confidence also emerge as challenging for the majority of participating schools.

Figure 25: Challenges and strengths



\*Reading, writing, listening, speaking

Schools with high proportions of pupils with English as an Additional language are more likely to report that 'Using pupils' existing knowledge of languages other than English' is a strength in their school (16 per cent, compared to seven per cent of all responding schools) and less likely to report it as a challenge (six per cent compared to 12 per cent of all responding schools). Schools with low or low-to-medium proportions of pupils with English as an Additional Language are more likely to report this as a major challenge for them.

**Table 8:** Whether schools perceive using pupils' existing knowledge of languages other than English as a challenge in relation to teaching a new language, by EAL quintile

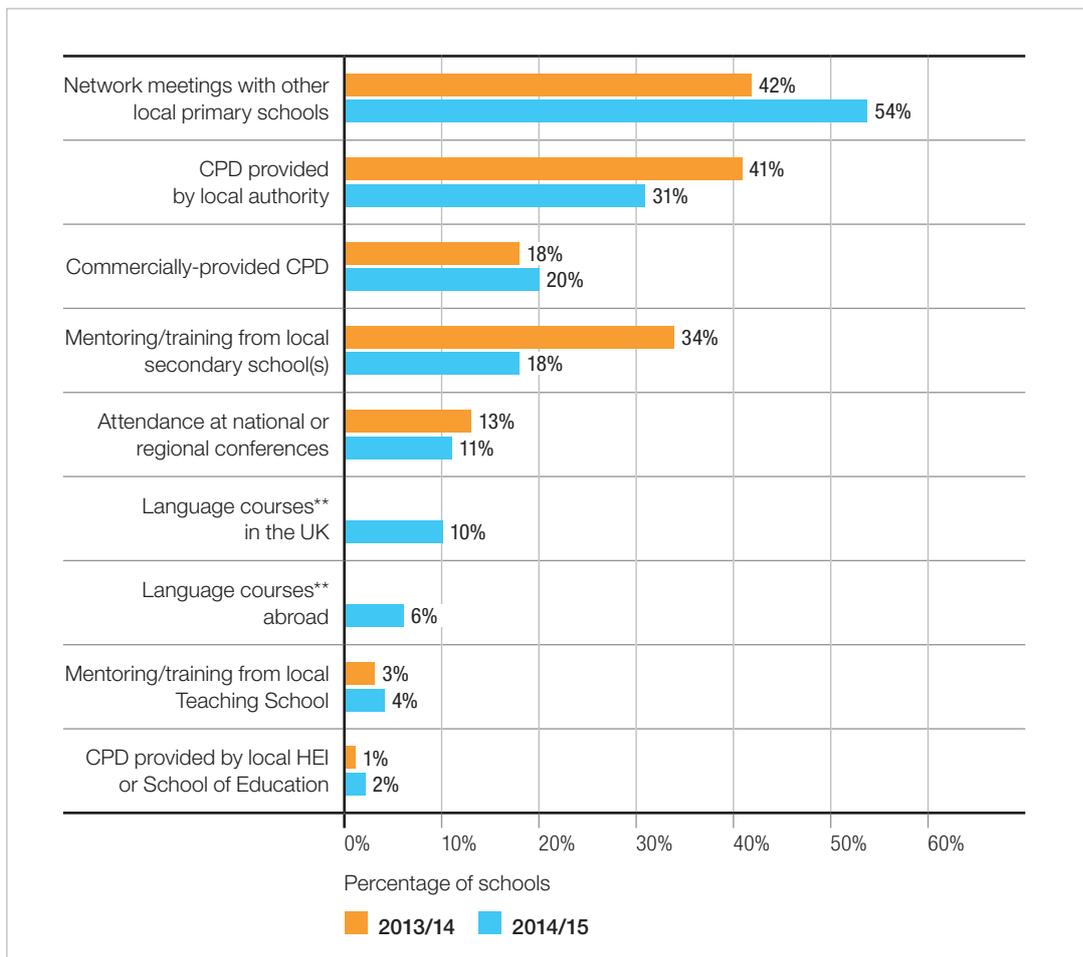
EAL Quintile	Not at all, we see this as one of our strengths	Not really a challenge for us	Quite challenging	A major challenge for our school
High EAL	16%	41%	37%	6%
High Med EAL	7%	35%	47%	10%
Med EAL	5%	38%	47%	11%
Low Med EAL	4%	47%	34%	15%
Low EAL	3%	41%	41%	16%
All schools	7%	40%	42%	12%

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

Over half (54 per cent) of responding schools take part in CPD networking meetings for languages with other primary schools, a proportion which has risen from 42 per cent in the 2013/14 survey. However, this finding is not reliable.<sup>44</sup> The proportion of schools participating in languages CPD provided by the local authority has declined from 41 per cent in the 2013/14 survey to 31 per cent this year. Similarly, a smaller proportion of primary schools is now receiving mentoring/training from their local secondary schools – just under 18 per cent this year compared to 34 per cent in 2013/14.

<sup>44</sup> There was not an option for 'None' and respondents were not allowed to proceed without ticking at least one option. Some respondents noted in the comments box that they had only ticked this box in order to move on, and they have been removed. However, it is possible that some ticked this box (the first, and perhaps the least formal arrangement) when in fact they have not taken part in this type of CPD

Figure 26: Types of CPD undertaken by staff teaching languages, 2013/14 and 2014/15\*



\*Multiple responses permitted

\*\*The option of language courses was not included in the 2013/14 survey.

## 4.7 | Case studies

Two schools that had been identified from their responses to the 2013 Language Trends survey for their commitment to language teaching in the primary phase, and for their insightful comments regarding the purposes and benefits of including the teaching of a new language within the primary curriculum, kindly hosted visits by researchers. Both are schools with diverse multilingual populations where above-average numbers of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Both clearly demonstrate the wider educational value of language learning for young children, and show, in ways that would be difficult to capture through survey methodology alone, how it connects to global citizenship, literacy and international cultural awareness.

### Canning Street Primary School | Newcastle upon Tyne



Type of school	Number of pupils	Age range	Achievement <sup>45</sup>
Mixed community school	474	3–11	84%

SEN <sup>46</sup>	EAL <sup>47</sup>	FSM <sup>48</sup>	Main language taught
5.6%	85% (= 32 languages)	42.6%	Spanish

During the visit, two interviews were conducted, one with the headteacher and another with a member of the Senior Leadership Team who had introduced Spanish teaching to the school seven years ago. The researchers also interviewed the specialist Spanish teacher, observed part of two lessons and held a focus group with a mixed-age group of eight pupils.

#### Provision

The school has been teaching a language for seven years and has always taught Spanish, a language which is widely supported by parents in this richly multilingual school because it is not spoken already by pupils. Both parents and teachers believe that this helps all pupils to feel they are starting in the same place, learning together.

All pupils from Reception to Year 6 have one lesson of Spanish every other week in a block of between one and one and a half hours. The specialist teacher, who is a native speaker of Spanish, uses the North Tyneside Scheme of Work supplemented with her own resources/realia to help integrate language lessons into the school's thematic curriculum and also provides a lunchtime Spanish club to further motivate pupils.

<sup>45</sup> Percentage of cohort achieving Level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths, 2014. National average 79%

<sup>46</sup> Percentage of pupils with SEN with statements or on School Action Plus. National average 7.7%

<sup>47</sup> Percentage of pupils with English not a first language. National average 18.7%

<sup>48</sup> Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals. National average 18%

### Key features

- **Use of a specialist teacher**

The Spanish teacher is a secondary-trained, native speaker with over 13 years' teaching experience. She is employed two days per week at Canning Street Primary School, during which time she teaches Spanish to every class from Reception to Year 6. She also teaches in an independent secondary school in Newcastle. Members of the leadership team described the appointment of a specialist teacher as a real benefit for the children as they get consistency in the approach to teaching and expert knowledge and pronunciation that most primary teachers lack when teaching a language. In a Year 3 lesson observed, the support assistant was present throughout, joining in with the singing and actions and supporting slower children to achieve their potential.

- **Languages are integrated with education for global citizenship**

Languages have high-level management support as part of the wider global citizenship agenda which permeates the school. As a holder of the British Council International School Award, the school has an active link with a school in Cataluña and a history of successful involvement with international projects. It has had three Comenius Assistants over the last three years, one from Spain and two from the Czech Republic, who taught the children about the culture as well as the language of their countries. A Czech parent support worker is also employed by the school. They have just embarked on an international science project with funding from the Erasmus European programme. Global awareness and international citizenship are strongly promoted, for example through the 'Send my friend to school' campaign in which pupils wrote to MPs using the languages they are learning during European Languages Day.

In Canning Street Primary School, language teaching and cultural awareness is deeply embedded in the curriculum. Over and above the scheme of work, the planning of content for language classes is an integral part of the termly meeting to develop the thematic curriculum which runs through all subjects being studied across the school. Year group teachers reinforce language and thematic links at different points throughout the week. Pupils have explored themes such as World War I, football, animals and dreams through Spanish as well as through other curriculum subjects.

*'The thematic curriculum helps me to be creative all the time because it changes every year. It means I can keep building on what has been learned elsewhere but in a new way.'*

Spanish teacher

The strong focus on cultural awareness and cross-curricular themes is motivating and memorable to pupils as are the team games and quizzes used to help break up the long block of time per week dedicated to Spanish. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about their involvement in the burning of the Marena doll – a Czech custom symbolising the triumph of life over death at the end of winter – which they were able to compare with the Mexican celebration of the Day of the Dead. They are very well acquainted with customs and festivals from across the Spanish-speaking world and understand how Spanish-speaking cultures differ one from another.

Pupils already think of their future careers as having an international dimension and see the value of learning other languages:

*'I'd like to be a footballer and if I go to a foreign team I'd have to speak the language.'* Pupil

- **Building on existing multilingualism within the school**

Pupils are proud of their linguistic achievements both in Spanish and their home languages, and children from both bilingual and monolingual backgrounds are enthusiastic about making comparisons between different languages and cultures:

*'Spanish and English have quite a lot of similarities because many words in both languages come from Latin.'* Pupil

The management and the specialist teacher share the conviction that all pupils benefit from learning a new language. They see Spanish as another way of helping all pupils to feel included:

*'When learning Spanish, children who have EAL find themselves in the same place as everyone else. They may not speak much English but in Spanish they can be as good as everyone else.'*  
School manager

- **Transition to secondary school**

Pupils are able to continue learning Spanish when they move to secondary school (the vast majority of pupils move to the local academy at the end of Year 6) and both primary and secondary schools undertake joint transition planning to ensure that prior learning is taken into account at the point of transfer. The secondary school knows Canning Street's commitment to languages and works to accommodate what pupils have achieved.

## Yeading Junior School | Hayes | Middlesex



Type of school	Number of pupils	Age range	Achievement <sup>49</sup>
Mixed community school	499	7–11	83%

SEN <sup>50</sup>	EAL <sup>51</sup>	FSM <sup>52</sup>	Main language taught
6.4%	83.5% (= 31 languages)	22.6%	French

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the headteacher and the languages coordinator, who is also a member of the Senior Leadership Team. The researchers held a question-and-answer session with a group of eight pupils taken from different classes from across the school who also demonstrated what they had learned in French through some impressive role plays. They were also able to meet a parent.

### Provision

The school has been teaching French in the curriculum for five years. All children throughout the school receive one hour's language teaching per week, taught either by the specialist teacher or by the class teacher. The specialist teacher, who has a Master's degree in primary language teaching, introduced French to the school and originally did all the teaching. He has since been promoted to Assistant Head and the strategy now is to move away from a 'one man show' by equipping and empowering classroom teachers. They continue to be guided by the specialist who supports them with a deep understanding of language teaching pedagogies as well as with pronunciation and cultural input from both France and the Caribbean.

### Key features

- **Language awareness**

Language awareness permeates the school and the school takes every opportunity to introduce a language dimension into learning. For example, French has been incorporated into Personal and Finance Education, for which the school is a Centre of Excellence. Class assemblies almost always use some French and home languages are encouraged and discussed openly. The governors have made language teaching a high priority and this, together with the headteacher's vision which sees all language study as contributing to literacy in English, underlies the school's success. Pupils encountered in the corridors spoke French quite spontaneously to the French teacher. They clearly see speaking other languages as a normal and natural part of their present and future lives.

*'Our language teaching is part of who we are. It's part of what we do and part of our children's success.'* School manager

<sup>49</sup> Percentage of cohort achieving Level 4 or above in reading, writing and maths, 2014. National average 79%

<sup>50</sup> Percentage of pupils with SEN with statements or on School Action Plus. National average 7.7%

<sup>51</sup> Percentage of pupils with English not a first language. National average 18.7%

<sup>52</sup> Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals. National average 18%

- **Transition to secondary school**

After Year 6, pupils move on to at least 13 secondary schools which offer a range of languages including Spanish, Italian and German as well as French. In order to assist transfer to secondary, teaching is focused on language skills rather than narrowly on French. The school is critical of what it sees as a reductionist, tokenistic approach to language teaching and has a policy of never presenting individual words, but always within the context of a sentence. Reading, including simple fables and poetry, is established from Year 3. In Years 5 and 6, children also study Latin.

Children are eager to have the opportunity to learn other languages when they go to secondary school and parents whose children have started a new language in Year 7 have reported back that they have been able to make a flying start. Evidence of this was provided quite spontaneously by a parent whom researchers happened to meet in the school.

*'We started with the basics like 'Hello' but it's been getting better and better.'* Pupil

- **Bilingualism seen as an asset**

The school's commitment to language across the curriculum is based on the conviction that *'Bilingual kids fare better in their lives'*. Both the Headteacher and the Languages Coordinator see the teaching of English, mother tongues and new languages, both ancient and modern, as contributing to children's integrated communicative capacity and literacy and these attitudes are reflected in pupils' comments:

*'The more languages you know, the brainier you get.'* Pupil

*'It helps with grammar and English. 29 per cent of the English language comes from French or Latin.'* Pupil

As in Canning Street, teachers see the teaching of a new language as a leveller, in which progress is constrained neither by a low level of English nor Special Educational Needs:

*'Some of our most successful pupils had no English when they arrived. Some pupils with SEN have done particularly well.'* Teacher

Parents at Yeading Primary School are ambitious for their children and see language learning as part of the educational basis for advancement in life:

*'My parents are taking some tuition. They say "My daughter knows some French so we should too".'* Pupil

#### 4.8 | Key points

- Not surprisingly, the introduction of compulsory language teaching in Key Stage 2 has had an immediate effect by pushing the percentage of primary schools teaching a language to 99 per cent, with some 12 per cent of schools reporting that they started language teaching at the beginning of the 2014/15 academic year. Many schools have formalised or strengthened existing provision in response to the new statutory requirements.
- Many primary schools (40 per cent) are confident that they already meet the requirements of the new national curriculum in full. Where schools are introducing changes to meet the new requirements, the focus is on providing additional resourcing for language teaching, reorganising the way in which languages are taught and making more time available for language teaching.
- Schools in the lowest quintile of educational achievement, and those with the highest proportions of children eligible for free school meals, are the most likely to be in the early stages of developing language teaching and the least likely to have mechanisms in place for monitoring and assessing language learning.
- Schools with high proportions of pupils with English as an Additional Language are less likely to see this fact as a challenge in relation to the teaching of new languages than are those with more monolingual pupil populations.
- Some 49 per cent of primary schools are also introducing pupils in Key Stage 1 to a language even though this is not a statutory requirement
- Finding sufficient curriculum time for languages, boosting staff confidence to teach languages and increasing staff competence are the greatest challenges that schools are facing in meeting the requirements of the national curriculum.
- In the majority of primary schools (57 per cent), language teaching is mainly carried out by the class teacher, although there is evidence of the involvement of a wide range of other people including parents, specialist teachers, governors and language assistants. While 42 per cent of schools have teachers who are either native speakers of the language being taught or have specialist qualifications in the language, as many as 31 per cent do not have any staff with more than a GCSE in a language.
- Although over half of responding schools report that they participate in networking/CPD events with other primary schools, the proportion of schools taking part in training organised by local authorities has declined from 41 per cent in 2013/14 to 31 per cent in 2014/15 and the number of primary schools receiving subject-specific support and training from local secondary schools has also dropped, from 34 per cent to 18 per cent.

# 5

## Transition from primary to secondary school

In making the teaching of a language compulsory for all pupils at Key Stage 2, the government has made it clear that schools must focus on enabling pupils to make significant progress in one language and in doing so, lay the foundations for further study at Key Stage 3. In turn, language teaching at Key Stage 3 must ‘build on the foundations laid at Key Stage 2’. In 2013/14, the Language Trends survey explored for the first time the degree to which primary and secondary schools were working together to support pupils in their transition from Key Stage 2 to 3. Serious gaps were identified in the level of collaboration between primary and secondary schools. The 2013/14 report also revealed fundamental differences of opinion between primary and secondary phase teachers as to the efficacy of language teaching at Key Stage 2 and the feasibility of developing sustainable cross-phase collaboration. This year’s survey has once again asked specific questions about the Key Stage 2/3 transition and sought to determine whether any progress has been made in bringing the two phases closer together to support seamless pupil progression from one educational phase to the other.

### 5.1 | Primary schools’ contact with secondary schools

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

**Figure 27:** Percentage of primary schools having contact with their local secondary school’s language department



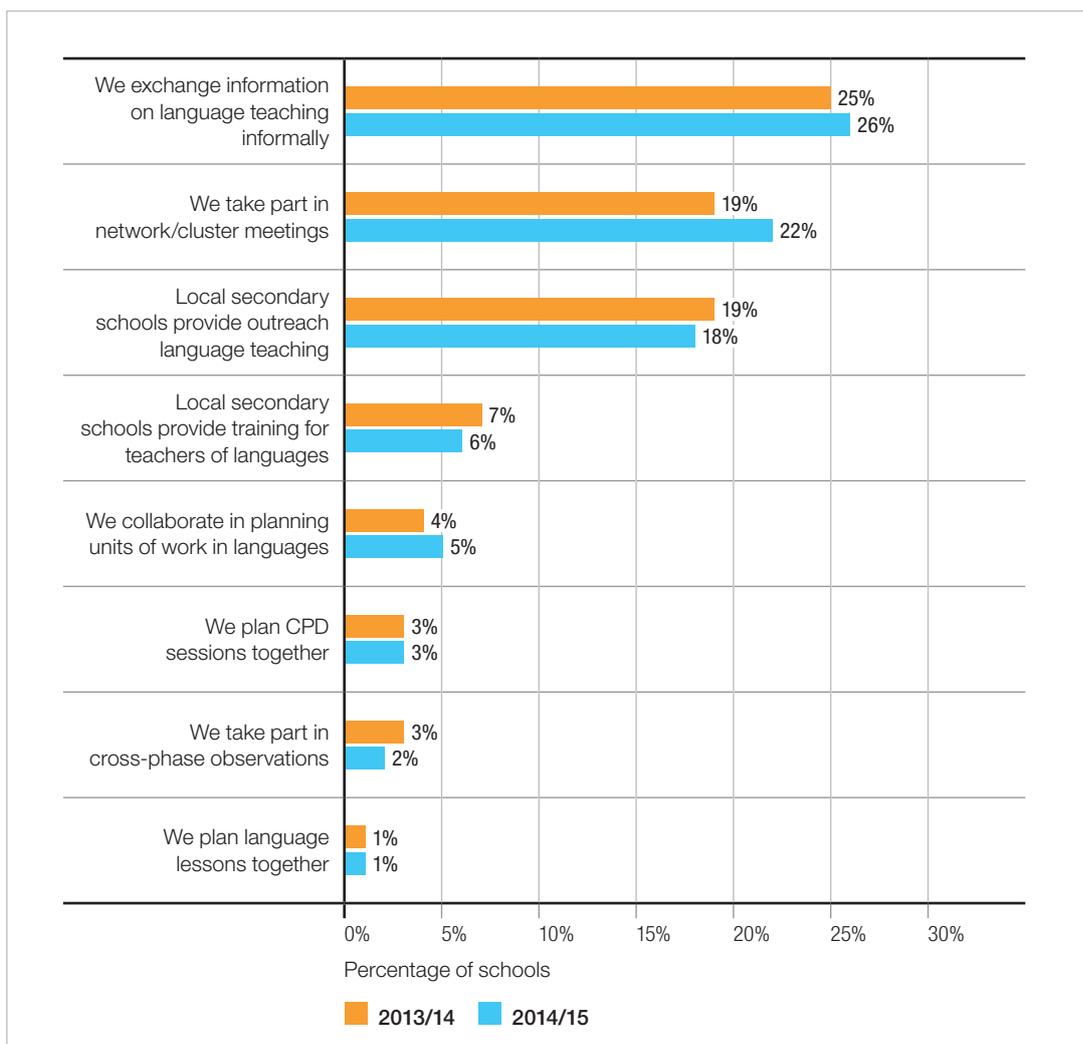
Some 44 per cent of responding primary schools report that they have no contact at all with the language departments of local secondary schools. This is a slight improvement on the 46 per cent of primary schools which said they had no subject-specific contacts with secondary schools in 2013/14. Some primary schools do not have strong links generally with their secondary schools, others say that collaboration that had existed previously has been curtailed:

*‘In the past the local secondary school was a specialist language school. They offered outreach sessions and links for support. This has changed recently.’*

*‘We used to have outreach support and secondary schools provided training and came in to teach, however in the last two/three years this has been withdrawn. We now deliver and plan our own sessions without this support.’*

### What type of contacts do primary schools have?

**Figure 28:** Types of contact with local secondary schools, 2013/14 and 2014/15 (as a percentage of all responding schools)\*



\*Multiple responses permitted

Those primary schools which did have contact (356 of the 635 schools which responded to this question) were asked to describe the nature of their contact. The most common forms of contact are a simple informal exchange of information (26 per cent) or participation in networks/cluster meetings (22 per cent). Nearly one in five primary schools (18 per cent) benefits from language teaching being provided by secondary teachers, although this does not mean that the secondary teachers are the main providers of language teaching (see section 4.5 above). Comments show the types of arrangement which have been established:

*'The secondary feeder school offers outreach language teaching to the cluster primaries (there is a charge).'*

*'A secondary teacher visits our school at the end of the school year to aid the transition for Year 6 pupils.'*

*'We have a native French speaker from the local high school who does conversation classes with Year 5 and 6.'*

Overall, the responses are very similar to those reported in 2013/14 but there is evidence of a decline in the already small numbers of secondary schools providing training or outreach teaching for primary schools, confirmed by qualitative data (see below).

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

### Have secondary schools started receiving significant numbers of pupils in Year 7 who have studied a language in Key Stage 2?

Responses to this question in this year's survey were compared to those received from state and independent schools in the 2013 and 2012 surveys.

**Table 9:** Percentage of secondary schools receiving pupils who have already studied a language in Key Stage 2

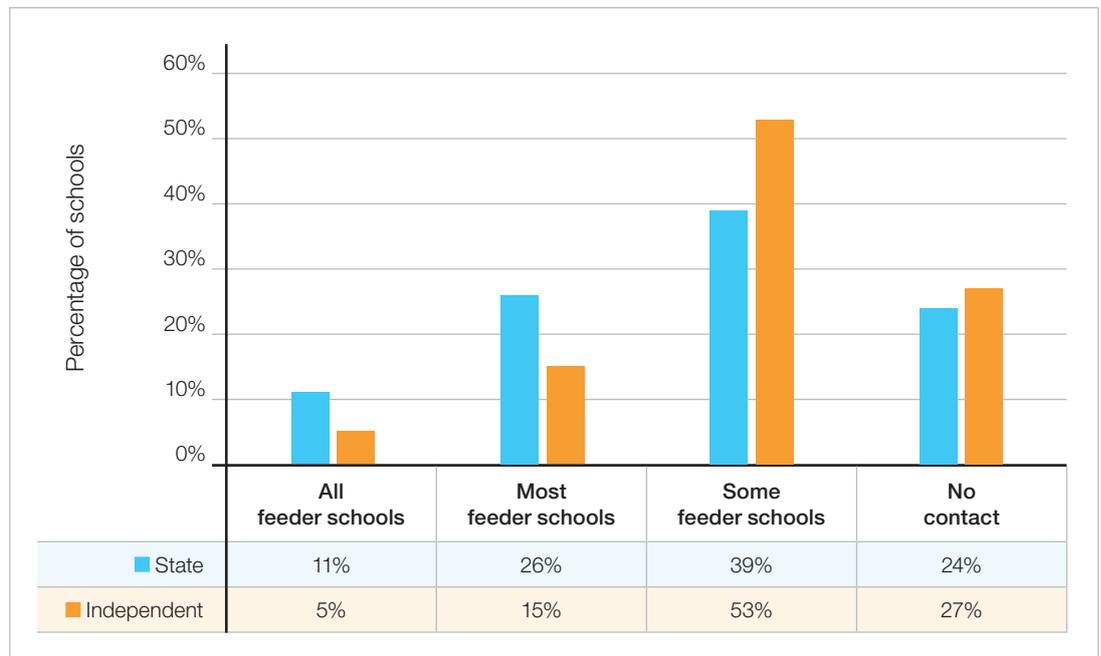
	2012	2013	2014
State	84%	72%	73%
Independent	84%	73%	87%

Between 2012 and 2013 there was a drop in the numbers of both state and independent secondary schools receiving pupils who had previously studied a language. In the state sector, this was considered to be a result of uncertainty about the status of languages in the primary school curriculum. In the independent sector, this was attributed to respondents reporting that they were seeing increases in, on the one hand, the number of international students joining the school who had not previously studied another language and on the other, the number of pupils with learning difficulties. However, it is possible that these factors were a reflection of the particular sample of independent schools responding to the survey in 2013 and not the independent sector as a whole. The quantitative data from the current 2014/15 survey shows that whereas 87 per cent of independent schools receive substantial numbers of pupils who have already studied a language, only 73 per cent of state schools do so. This proportion has changed little since the impending statutory status of languages in the primary school curriculum was first confirmed in 2013, although one can expect it to do so in future.

**Do secondary schools have contacts with local primary schools?**

Secondary schools that reported receiving significant numbers of pupils in Year 7 who had already studied a language were asked whether they had contact with their feeder primary schools in relation to language learning. A total of 24 per cent of state secondary schools, and 27 per cent of independent schools, report that they have no contact of this kind at all with their feeder schools. In 2013, the proportion of both state and independent schools receiving substantial numbers of pupils in Year 7 with prior experience of learning a language, but no contacts with their feeder schools, was 23 per cent.

**Figure 29:** Secondary school language departments having contacts with local primary schools



Some 37 per cent of state secondary schools and 20 per cent of independent schools do have contact with all or most of their feeder primary schools in relation to languages. Comparison with responses in 2013 indicates that the introduction of compulsory language learning has not yet stimulated increased contact between language teachers in state primary and secondary schools. In 2013, 18 per cent of secondary school respondents said they had contact with all their feeder schools (compared to 11 per cent this year) and 23 per cent said they had no contact at all, compared to 24 per cent in this year’s survey.<sup>53</sup> Both the types of collaboration which have been established and the obstacles schools face in developing it are discussed below.

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

This question was answered by those schools that answered ‘yes’ to the previous question about whether or not they receive significant numbers of pupils who have already studied a language in Key Stage 2.

<sup>53</sup> In 2013 respondents were asked to choose between only three options: All feeder schools; Some feeder schools; No contact

There is a substantial difference between the state and independent sectors in the extent to which they cater for pupils continuing to learn the same language. While just over half of independent schools offer this possibility to all pupils, only 28 per cent of state schools do so, for example:

*'We have a primary school within our school within which we teach French to groups from Year 2 upwards – we are therefore able to build on prior knowledge.'* (Independent school)

*'Some students have studied French and German whereas a lot study Spanish, which is not offered.'* (State school)

*'We are situated on the English/Welsh border. Our English feeder schools all teach French to Key Stage 2 and this is continued on arrival in Year 7. Our Welsh feeder primaries teach Welsh. We have no provision for Welsh at our school.'* (State school)

In the independent sector, approximately a quarter of schools have a policy requiring all pupils to begin a new language they have not studied before at Key Stage 3, whereas only seven per cent of state schools adopt this approach.

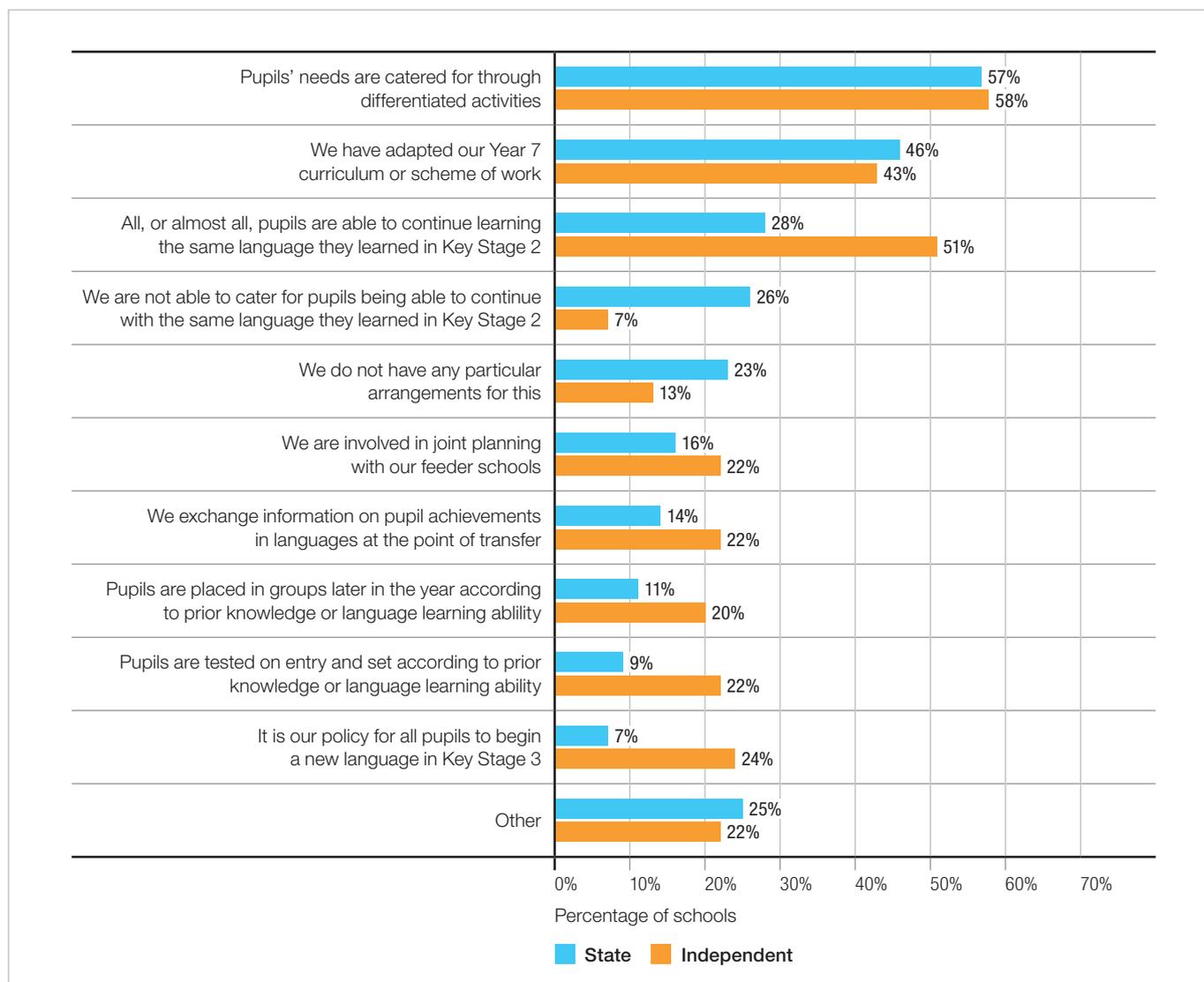
Independent schools are more likely to test pupils on entry to Year 7, to be involved in joint planning with their feeder schools and to exchange information with them on pupil achievement at the point of transfer. It is possible that the higher level of collaboration between independent secondary and primary schools is due to the fact that many independent secondary schools have their own primary phase departments or 'sister' schools.

In both the independent and the state sectors, the preferred method of dealing with pupils' prior experience of learning languages when they start in Year 7 is through differentiated activities. According to the quantitative data, differentiation by the teacher is the method used by more than half the schools in both sectors. Comments from respondents include the following:

*'We baseline test all of our Year 7 students in French to see what (if anything) they know, but they are still taught in mixed ability groups. We differentiate based on students' prior learning.'*

*'Our groups are formed on ability in English and maths at Key Stage 2, which doesn't necessarily reflect ability in a language. Differentiation is therefore key to success for all.'*

**Figure 30:** Arrangements in secondary schools to build on pupils' prior learning in languages at Key Stage 2\*



Compared to the responses to the same question in the 2013/14 survey, there has been an increase in the proportion of state schools saying that they exchange information on achievements in language learning with primary schools at the point of transfer. Although the proportion is still low at 14 per cent, it has risen from the 11 per cent recorded in last year's survey.

Comparison with responses in the 2013/14 survey indicates that there has been a decline in the numbers of state secondary schools placing pupils in groups later in the year according to language learning ability or prior knowledge – only 11 per cent this year, compared to 18 per cent in 2013/14. However, a number of schools comment that pupils in Year 7 are placed in sets for all subjects according to their SATs results in English and mathematics and that neither language ability nor

prior learning is taken into account. There has been a very slight reduction in the proportion of state secondary schools saying they have no particular arrangements to build on pupils' prior learning of a language – 23 per cent down from 25 per cent.

### 5.3 | Schools working together

This section, and the one which follows it, are based on comments from both primary and secondary respondents about both informal and formal collaboration with teachers in the other phase. This section looks at how schools are working together to motivate pupils, and to plan and coordinate language teaching to ensure that pupil progression in language learning between Key Stages 2 and 3 is as seamless as it can be. Evidence of the support and training being provided to primary schools by secondary specialists is also considered.

Comments from [secondary](#) teachers are shown in [blue](#) in this section.

#### Motivating pupils

Many primary schools describe opportunities provided by local state sector secondary schools to motivate and enthuse young pupils for language learning. These include languages and cultural festivals, plays put on by secondary pupils using their language skills, competitions and 'taster' sessions as well as ad hoc or regular interaction with secondary pupils who provide help with languages to younger pupils. Such collaboration can do much to foster an interest in languages for participating pupils from all key stages. A small sample of the responses received from primary teachers describing a wide range of initiatives is as follows:

*'Sixth form pupils run an after-school German club for our Year 6 pupils.'*

*'The secondary school runs a French café and marketplace experience for Year 5, and a joint science/French experience for Year 4.'*

*'Use of Language Ambassadors from local secondary school (students) who come down to work with groups.'*

#### Communication, planning and logistics

A number of respondents to both the primary and secondary surveys describe active collaboration between state school teachers working in Key Stages 2 and 3.

Respondents from primary schools describe bilateral planning meetings, or in one case joint attendance at meetings coordinated by a local university. They also provide evidence of primary and secondary schools collaborating on schemes of work or on specific activities designed to facilitate transition between the two phases:

*'The main feeder school has suggested a scheme of work to follow so that all future students are receiving the same input.'*

*'As a local cluster of schools, including the secondary, a scheme of work was written for French.'*

*'As part of transition week the languages department at the secondary school organise a day.'*

Other types of collaboration are intended as enrichment activities for all or some pupils:

*'We attend special language days with a year group where they have the opportunity to work on different aspects of the language with a specialist teacher. These are usually only once a year.'*

*'We collaborated with our local secondary school this summer on an Able Linguists Day when a group from each feeder school was invited to a morning with Year 8 pupils and their Mandarin teacher to learn Mandarin.'*

There is also evidence of more formal linking for staff and curriculum development:

*'I am a secondary-trained MFL teacher now working in the feeder schools to my former secondary. I am in contact with the secondary MFL staff and we have an annual review to look at progress and for Year 7 staff to be updated on new materials. They also suggest to me strategies for inclusion in Year 6. This has been established since 2003.'*

A number of secondary school respondents confirm that, in addition to cross-phase meetings to discuss transition for languages, there is positive action to build sustainable collaboration across Key Stages 2 and 3:

*'All our feeder schools (12) have a four-year programme of study in French. Our primary coordinator has trained all primary teachers in order for our primary students to have at least one hour a week of French. This has been happening since 2006 and in practice has worked extremely well.'*

*'Several teachers are delivering primary French to a cluster of our feeder primaries this year. So far it is going great – it also means we can adapt our scheme of work knowing what input there has been.'*

Although some of this work is long-standing, there is also evidence of new activity, in response to the introduction of statutory languages in Key Stage 2:

*'Only this year do we have time allocated to liaising with primary schools. We are in the early stages of trying to ensure feeder primaries cover a similar content so that we can implement baseline testing upon entry to Year 7. We plan to adapt the Year 7 curriculum as we gather more information.'*

In some cases secondary schools have nominated teachers to take responsibility for developing liaison with primary schools:

*'One member of staff is the primary link: teaches a series of lessons to Year 6 during the year and works with the feeder schools to help and create a progressive scheme of work.'*

*'We have a very large catchment area but our head of specialism runs a training session every Monday for primary school teachers to equip them with skills to teach French.'*

Responses from the independent sector show that collaboration between Key Stages 2 and 3 is very often made easier by the fact that many independent secondary schools also have a junior school on site which supplies large numbers of pupils to Year 7 of the secondary school, or there is a 'sister' school from which the majority of pupils transfer at the end of Key Stage 2:

*'We have our own Junior and Infant departments, which are our main feeders.'*

*'Our main feeder school is our own prep school, which provides 40 per cent of our Year 7 class.'*

### **Training and support provided by secondary schools**

Only five respondents to this year's primary survey describe arrangements for support and training which have been established with their local secondary schools to help them develop their teaching of languages to the level required by the new national curriculum and to help ensure pupils' smooth transition to Key Stage 3, for example:

*'Contact with secondary school used to model/support staff new to language teaching.'*

*'Recently I have been invited to attend twilight sessions at a local secondary school organised by ALL.'*

*'I went to the local secondary school to observe lessons about two years ago. Last year I asked for a teacher to come in and watched her teach a lesson from our unit of Tout le Monde. In the summer of last year I had a French teacher from a middle school come in to lead a lesson. (She is a native French speaker.)'*

In spite of these examples of active cross-phase collaboration, the majority of secondary school respondents comment rather on the various obstacles which prevent them from working with their primary colleagues on issues related to transition from Key Stage 2 to 3. These are considered in more detail in the section which follows.

## **5.4 | Barriers to collaboration**

This section looks at comparative views from primary and secondary teachers about the barriers to collaboration between primary and secondary schools. It is significant that the vast majority of secondary respondents' comments relate to these barriers which include logistics and communications, curriculum discrepancies and perceptions of the quality of language teaching currently being delivered in primary schools.

### **Logistics and communications**

Only a few primary survey respondents comment on the logistical difficulties of engagement with local secondary schools:

*'This is a real bugbear! Despite all our best efforts the local secondary schools are unable/unwilling to fully engage in transition discussions. When their language staff change, we're back to square one!'*

*'Very little contact, mainly asked to provide my lesson plans so they know what the pupils have learned when they start in Year 7.'*

However, a great many of the secondary respondents describe a range of logistical difficulties they face in planning for transition with primary colleagues. The three obstacles mentioned most often (though not ranked) are as follows:

- The large numbers of primary feeder schools, often over a wide geographical area, make sustained collaboration very difficult

*'Being a faith school we have a large number of feeder primary schools, some at significant distances away. It has not always been easy to make contact with them.'*

*'We have over 90 feeder schools over several boroughs.'*

- Primary schools are unresponsive to approaches by secondary schools

*'In the past... we used to go to our feeder schools to teach, but in the last two years even though we have offered to go there, they are not interested.'*

*'We invited all local primary schools to a training session with us (to boost confidence with language teaching) but sadly none replied expressing an interest in attending.'*

*'We have tried to set up a planning group, but this has not been supported by the local primary schools.'*

- Many schools have neither the time nor the capacity to work with primary colleagues on transition

*'Currently there is no capacity within the department to allocate a member of staff to teach at the primary schools.'*

*'Time constraints and lack of staffing in our school to do so. As staff have left the languages team, they have not been replaced.'*

*'We used to but there is no time at the moment on the timetable for primary school work.'*

There is also evidence of cross-phase collaboration coming to an end as a result of the withdrawal of funding for specialist language colleges which, from 1995 onwards, had been charged with promoting languages within their local communities:

*'We no longer have a link teacher working with primary schools (unlike a few years ago when we were a language college and had very close links/curriculum with local primaries).'*

*'A lot of outreach work used to take place with our staff going to deliver classes in primary schools every week – this stopped when funding through Specialism stopped.'*

Financial constraints and other priorities within schools also appear to be behind the cessation of various types of collaboration between primary and secondary schools:

*'In the past we have shared the cost of appointing a language teaching assistant (LTA).'*

*'In 2010 we had organised feeder/secondary link meetings to arrange how to have a consistent approach to languages teaching and continuation of this at secondary. The remnants of this are still in place, although lots of schools have given the languages' time over to Literacy/Numeracy/SATs preparation.'*

### Curriculum discrepancies

Secondary teachers of languages responding to this year's survey report a number of concerns which relate to discrepancies between language learning in Key Stage 2 and the Key Stage 3 curriculum that prevent secondary schools building on knowledge gained in Key Stage 2. These are summed up in the following comment from a secondary school teacher:

*'But they are not studying the same language nor are they studying a consistent curriculum, meaning we basically have to start from scratch.'*

The variability of provision between different feeder primary schools is also a problem for secondary schools hoping to build on language learning undertaken in Key Stage 2:

*'There is no structure to what primary schools have done so some have done quite a bit, some have hardly done any, some have done one language, some have done another and some haven't done any.'*

A lesser but related concern is about which language pupils have studied:

*'Too many feeder schools teach different languages at different stages to differing degrees, covering different topics, so we can't cater for direct continuity.'*

*'Pupils in Year 7 have said they received 30 minutes on an irregular basis – one year French, one year German etc. Most unhelpful for us.'*

Many teachers find that the small amount of language pupils have learned in primary schools means that all pupils can quickly be brought up to the same level:

*'By the time they come back in September even those that have done some languages can only usually recall a couple of days of the week and a few colours. They have no idea of sentence structure or the basics of grammar. So we have a transition term where we aim to bring everyone together and move on from there.'*

*'We do not find even amongst students who have taken a language before that there is enough prior knowledge to warrant setting differently. We cannot cater for all the different arrangements and so we do not really build on anything they did before.'*

Another concern raised by a small number of secondary respondents is that pupils entering Year 7 are often set according to their SATs scores which do not accurately reflect their competency or capability in a language:

*'As Year 7 languages are blocked with English, setting depends on their English ability.'*

*'This year we have set on entry according to average maths and English levels.'*

### Perceptions of the quality of language teaching in primary schools

There are many comments from secondary teachers demonstrating scepticism of primary schools' ability to deliver what they regard as a worthwhile level of language knowledge that pupils can apply to their studies in secondary school:

*'The reliability of good teaching at Key Stage 2 is poor – students come here with huge variations in knowledge. Even those who have studied French for three years cannot spell the initial words of je m'appelle, j'ai .... ans. We assume zero knowledge and differentiate in class.'*

*'Pupils seem to struggle to transfer their knowledge and skills from Key Stage 2 to 3.'*

Some respondents feel that languages in primary schools are not currently being taught rigorously enough or for sufficient time for secondary schools to be able to build on:

*'It would help massively if there was a much more rigid structure in primary schools so then continuity could take place. With primary schools largely doing what they want this is impossible.'*

*'Many of the students know vocabulary, but their ability to use it in sentences is very limited. One lesson a week in primary school is NOT enough to learn a language.'*

However, one primary school is optimistic that with the greater formalisation of language teaching in her school, these difficulties would be overcome:

*'We have taught French for years – teaching has improved. We hope this will ensure that pupils move on in high school; previous experience has shown that they “mark time” for the first year.'*

In the case study primary schools visited by the researchers, the issue of transition had not proved to be as intractable as perhaps the evidence in this chapter suggests. The fears expressed by secondary schools responding to the survey should perhaps be balanced by the experiences reported by primary schools where provision is already well-established, such as this:

*'Our students all give very positive feedback and our former students say that it helped them in their language studies at secondary school.'*

## 5.5 | Key points

- Although some schools are developing effective collaboration and joint planning across Key Stages 2 and 3, as many as 44 per cent of primary schools in England still have no contact with the secondary schools to which their pupils move at the end of Year 6.
- Secondary schools cite large numbers of primary feeders, teacher capacity/time and lack of interest on the part of primary schools as the main reasons why they are unable to establish sustainable collaboration with their primary feeders to ease pupil transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3.
- Secondary teachers are concerned about the wide variations in quality of provision of language teaching at Key Stage 2 and sceptical of primary schools' ability to deliver what they regard as a worthwhile level of language knowledge that pupils can apply to their studies in secondary school.
- Independent schools are more likely than state schools to be able to offer pupils the opportunity to continue learning the language they learned at Key Stage 2.
- Many secondary schools organise/host events such as festivals/plays and competitions which motivate young language learners from Key Stage 2, and older pupils in Key Stage 3 are often involved in extra-curricular clubs and conversation support for younger pupils. However, financial constraints and other priorities within schools have led to the cessation of various types of collaboration between primary and secondary schools.
- There is no evidence that levels of collaboration between primary and secondary schools have improved since 2013 and, as shown in the previous chapter, the proportion of primary schools receiving languages-related support from secondary schools has declined from 34 to 18 per cent.
- The need to promote effective transition in languages between Key Stages 2 and 3 is not yet high on the agendas of either primary or secondary schools.

# 6

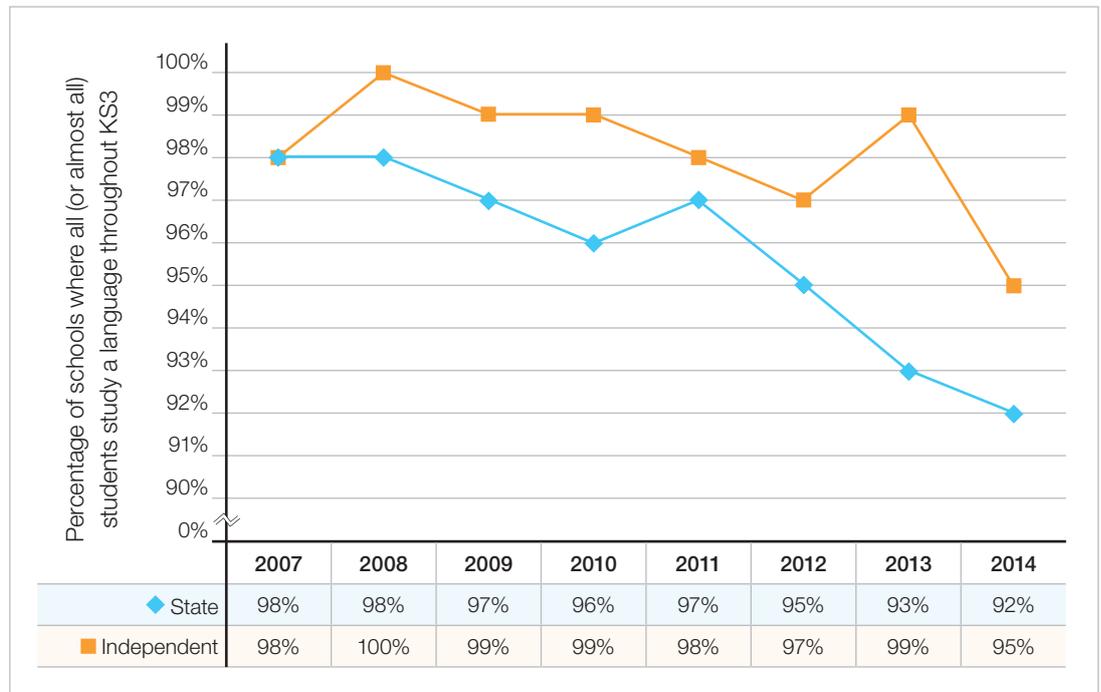
## Take-up and participation in secondary schools

This chapter focuses on school practices in relation to provision for languages from Key Stage 3 to sixth form and how these are evolving in response to external pressures such as school performance measures and financial constraints. It explores the opportunities offered to pupils to study languages in the different key stages, their responses in terms of take-up and what factors are influencing this.

### 6.1 | Key Stage 3

#### Do all pupils study a language at Key Stage 3?

**Figure 31:** Schools where all, or almost all, pupils study a language at Key Stage 3, 2007–2014



In 2007, when this question was first asked, 98 per cent of responding secondary schools in both the state and independent sectors reportedly taught languages to all pupils, except in special circumstances. Longitudinal data show that there is a growing trend in both sectors to exclude or excuse some pupils from language study. In the state sector this is happening in eight per cent of schools. As demonstrated by respondents' comments, this can affect up to 30 per cent of the cohort:

*'Approximately 7.5 per cent (low ability) do literacy work instead.'*

*'Approximately 40 out of 140 do additional English instead. These are mostly students who are completely new to English.'*

*'Approximately 30 per cent do not study a language. They do additional literacy.'*

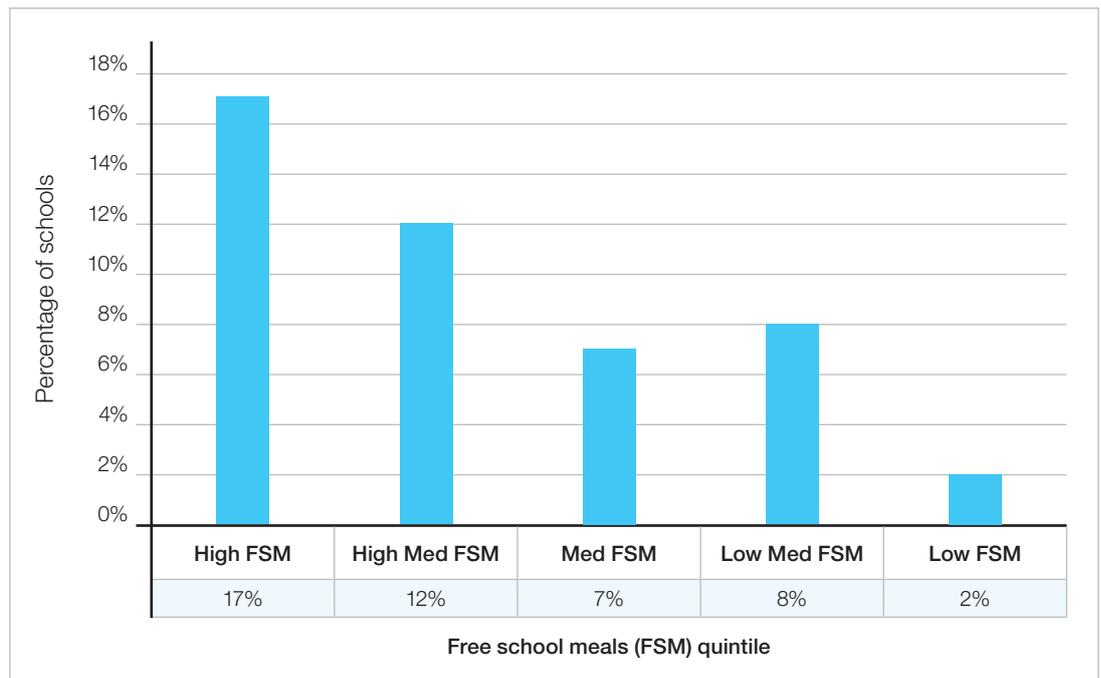
*'Only the bottom sets of each year group do not study languages as they are having to take extra English classes.'*

*'10–15 per cent – excused to receive SEN.'*

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

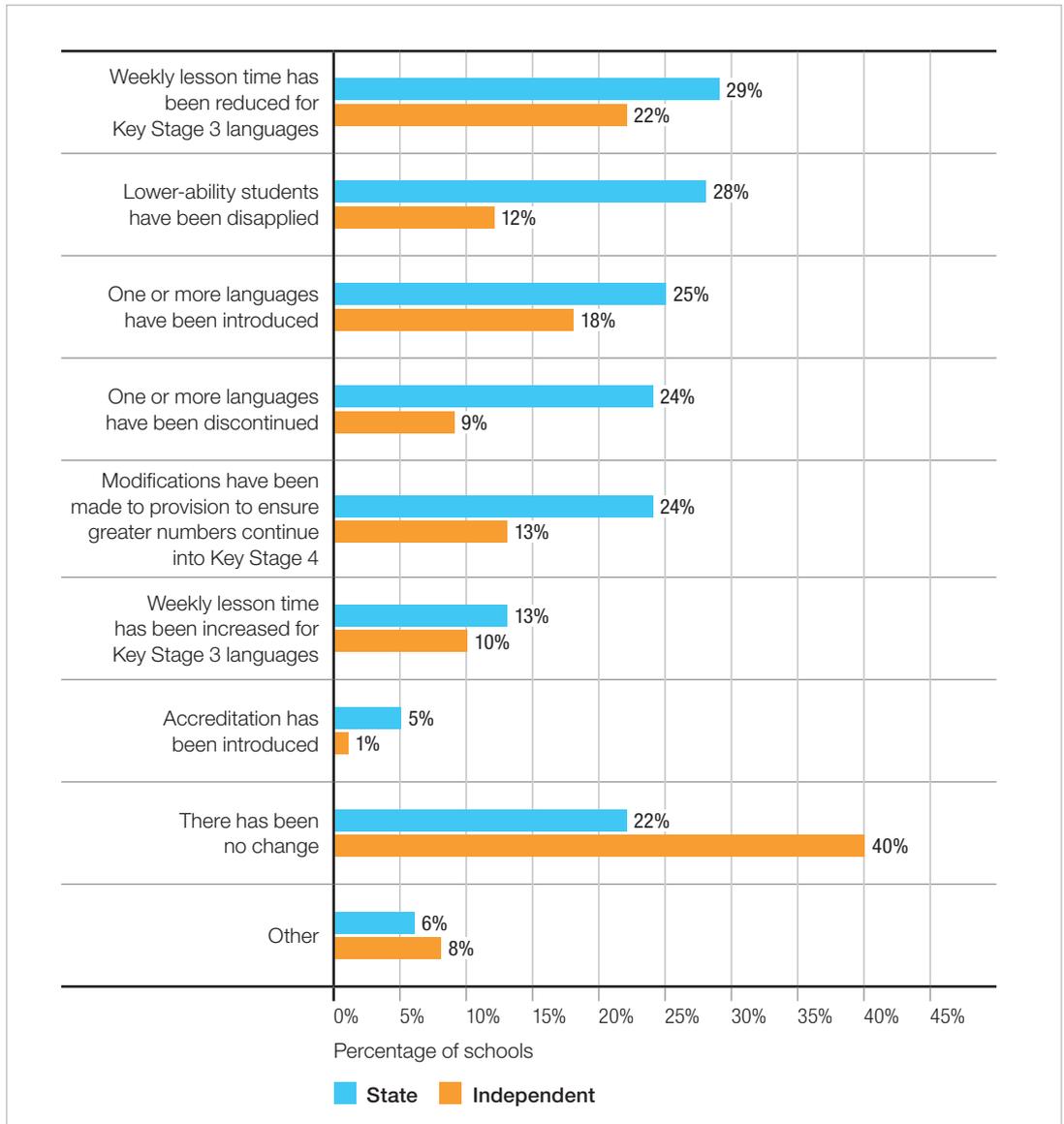
The responses to the previous question were analysed according to the socio-economic profile of the school. This shows that the tendency to disapply pupils from languages at Key Stage 3 correlates with socio-economic disadvantage and that schools with the most advantaged pupil populations (low proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals) are much less likely to practise disapplication of pupils than are those in the most disadvantaged quintile.

**Figure 32:** Proportions of schools in which not all pupils study a language at Key Stage 3, by socio-economic indicator



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

**Figure 33:** Recent changes to Key Stage 3 provision for languages, 2014\*



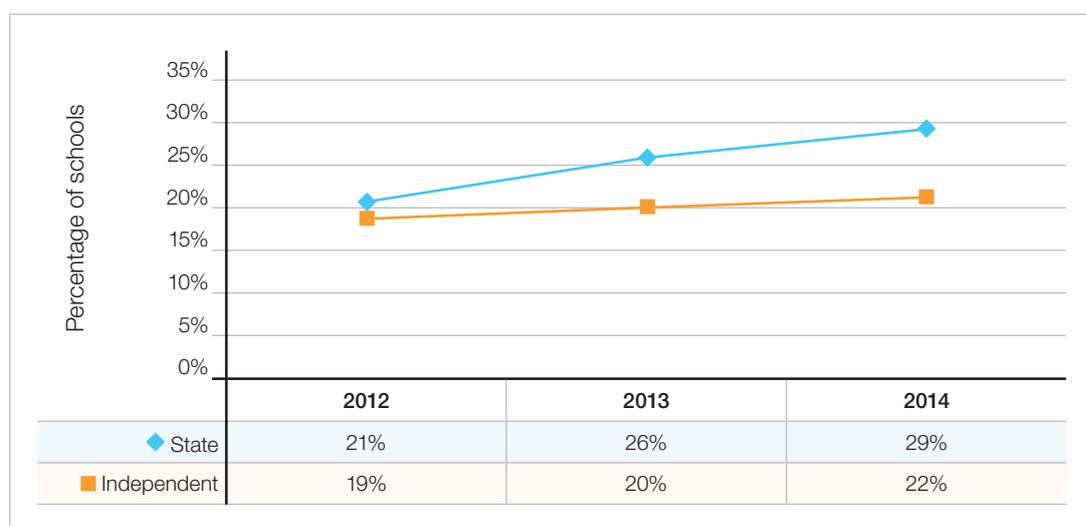
\*Multiple responses permitted

As confirmed by both quantitative and qualitative responses, there is a continuing tendency for schools to reduce the time made available for language teaching at Key Stage 3, both in the independent and the state sectors. One quarter of state schools have introduced a new language at Key Stage 3 over the past few years, and a similar proportion have discontinued teaching one or more languages at this level. As many as 28 per cent of schools in the state sector say they disapply lower-ability pupils from language study.

### Reductions in lesson time

The reduction of lesson time is the most frequently reported change in both the state and independent sectors (29 per cent and 22 per cent of respondents, respectively). These proportions have increased between 2012 and 2014 from 21 per cent to 29 per cent in the state sector, and from 19 per cent to 22 per cent in the independent sector, as shown in the following figure:

**Figure 34:** Percentages of schools where lesson time for languages has been reduced at Key Stage 3, 2012–2014



A small sample of the many comments received from those teachers completing this year’s survey demonstrates the nature of the problem:

*‘Curriculum hours for Year 8 and Year 9 have been reduced in the past two years. The reduction of hours has obviously affected progress and Key Stage 4 uptake.’*

*‘In Years 8 and 9, pupils now receive five lessons over two weeks rather than six (a lesson was needed to introduce fortnightly Drama in Years 8 and 9).’*

Comments show that the reduction in lesson time for languages at Key Stage 3 is linked to the reduction of Key Stage 3 to two years:

*‘Key Stage 3 is now only Year 7 to Year 8. So all students do a language or two in our Key Stage 3, but not up to Year 9.’*

*‘Key Stage 3 only in Years 7 and 8 at our school. At Year 9 students start GCSE options.’*

However, a small number of schools report modest increases in the time available for languages, sometimes because one year group has seen an increase in hours of language tuition per week and another has seen a decrease or because the school has reduced the number of languages on offer to support pupil progression in one language as well as to free up curriculum time for other subjects:

*'The amount of time dedicated to languages at Key Stage 3 has increased (from a very low base, and after criticism from Ofsted).'*

*'Number of lessons has decreased for top sets, from four lessons a fortnight to three lessons a fortnight. The number of lessons has increased for all the other sets, from two lessons a fortnight to three lessons a fortnight.'*

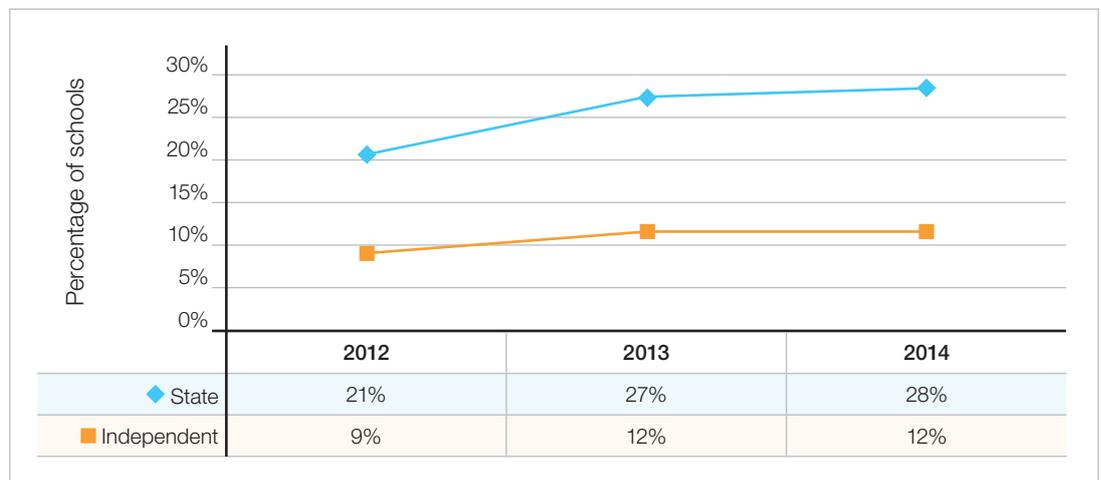
**Disapplication of pupils from language study at Key Stage 3**

The figure of 28 per cent of schools which say they disapply some pupils from language study in Key Stage 3 is considerably higher than the eight per cent which say that not all pupils study a language at Key Stage 3. The difference between the two is explained in that, whereas in the eight per cent, whole classes or sets are not timetabled to do languages, in the case of the 28 per cent, it is individual pupils that are being withdrawn from all or some language classes:

*'Only very few are disappplied who have serious grammatical dyslexia.'*

However, there is some overlap between the two groups. The proportion of schools which disapply lower-ability pupils from language study at Key Stage 3 increased in both the state and independent sectors between 2012 and 2013 and continues to show a small increase in the state sector in 2014, as the following chart shows:

**Figure 35:** Percentages of schools which disapply lower-ability pupils from language study at Key Stage 3, 2012–2014



Disapplication is practised by all types of state school. Schools which report that they do so were analysed by socio-economic profile and by performance quintile, and no significant pattern emerges. There is no significant difference either between academies, community or voluntary-aided schools in terms of their response to this option.

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

In the state sector, 24 per cent of schools have recently made changes to language provision at Key Stage 3 in order to improve take-up at Key Stage 4. These include measures such as changes to the languages offered to different year groups:

*‘We have changed the curriculum so that students now study just one language throughout Key Stage 3 in order to try and increase the attainment of students in this subject.’*

*‘We have changed the language provision in Year 7 to include French, Spanish and German (previously we only offered French in Year 7), with the aim of increasing uptake of German in Year 8 and to GCSE and giving pupils more flexibility in their language choices.’*

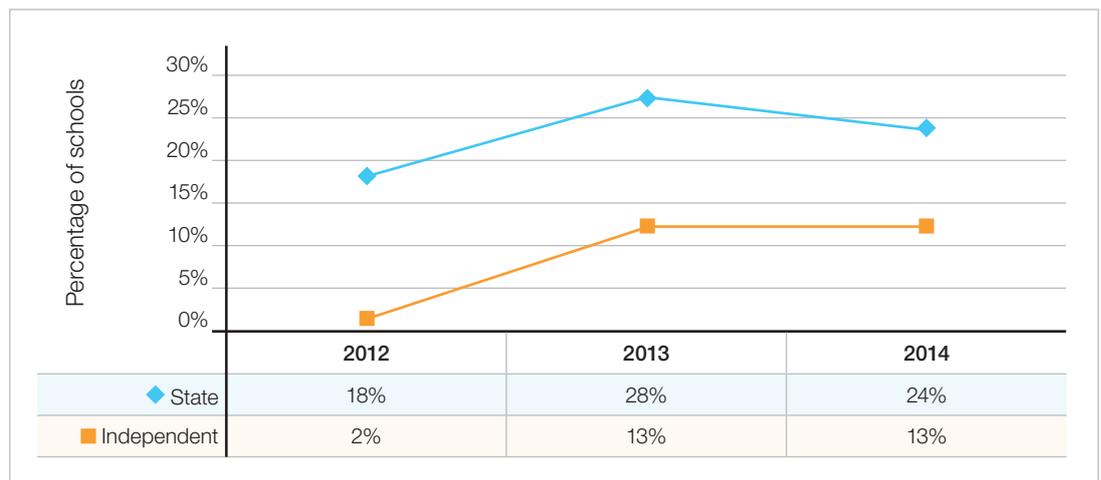
Other changes mentioned include the introduction of different accreditation (in this case the International Baccalaureate (IB)) and benefits to attract students towards the study of a language:

*‘All students follow the IB curriculum. Students can now see a better natural progression from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 as the IB is for five years and each year students take exams that move them on an upper phase.’*

*‘We have included more trips and incentives to encourage take-up.’*

However, as shown in the following figure, a smaller proportion of state schools than in 2013 are now saying they have modified provision at Key Stage 3 in order to encourage take-up at Key Stage 4:

**Figure 36:** Percentages of schools making modifications to languages provision at Key Stage 3 in order to ensure greater numbers continue into Key Stage 4, 2012–2014



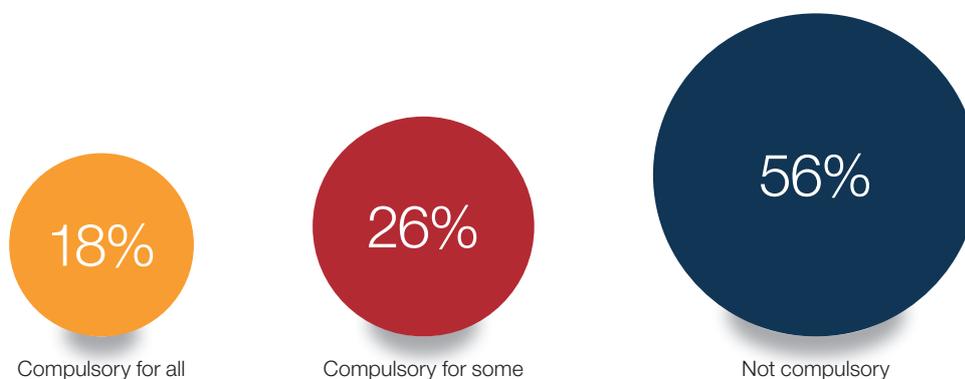
This may be linked to a reduction in the influence of the English Baccalaureate policy, as discussed below in the section on take-up at Key Stage 4.

## 6.2 | The status of languages at Key Stage 4

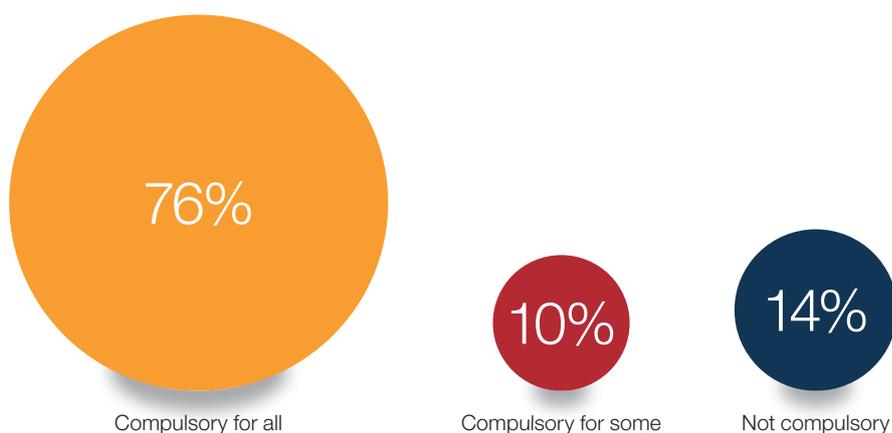
### What proportion of schools make language learning compulsory at Key Stage 4?

In the state school sector, 18 per cent of schools make a language compulsory for all pupils at Key Stage 4, while in independent schools the proportion is 76 per cent. A further 26 per cent of state schools, and 10 per cent of independent schools, make the study of a language compulsory for *some* pupils.

*Figure 37: Status of languages at Key Stage 4, state schools*



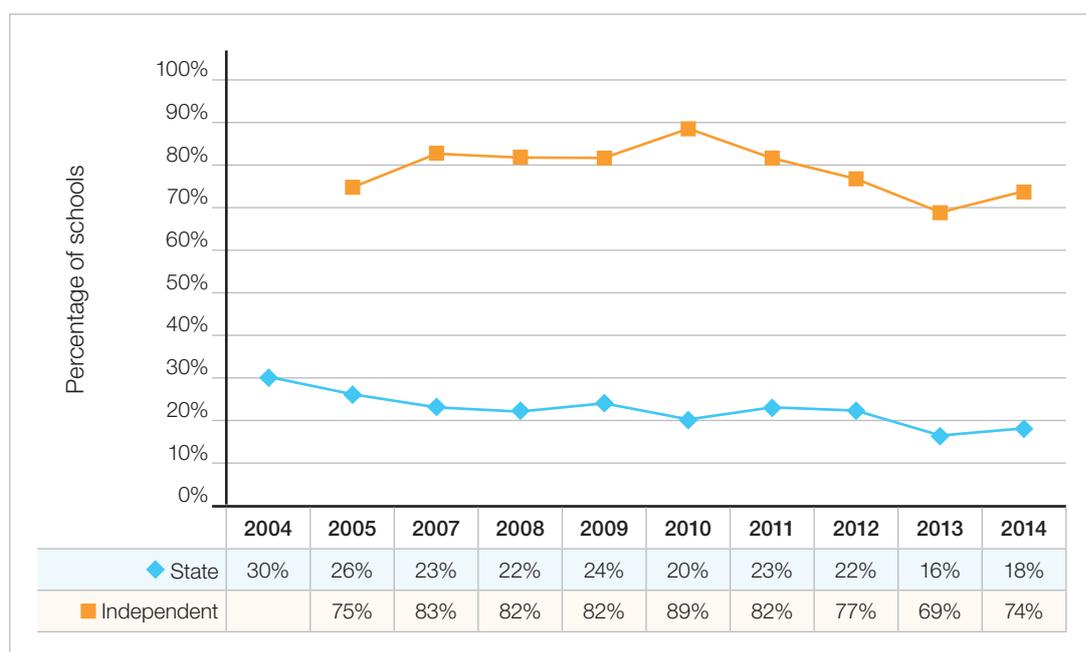
*Figure 38: Status of languages at Key Stage 4, independent schools*



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

The 2013/14 Language Trends report showed that the proportion of state schools where the study of languages was compulsory had declined from 2004 and reached its lowest-ever level, at 16 per cent. By contrast, the 2014/15 survey shows a slight increase in the numbers of both independent and state schools which make languages a compulsory subject for all pupils at Key Stage 4.

**Figure 39:** Percentages of schools where languages are compulsory for all at Key Stage 4, 2004–2014



The introduction of compulsory language learning is not always popular, as comments show:

*'At least one language is now compulsory at Key Stage 4 (as of Sept 2014) but this was brought in against the recommendations of the languages department and has not been well received by quite a large portion of the cohort who are unhappy about a reduction in PE curriculum time.'*

*'Has changed from being a compulsory subject. There were problems with this as there were a number of pupils who did not want to be studying a language at Key Stage 4.'*

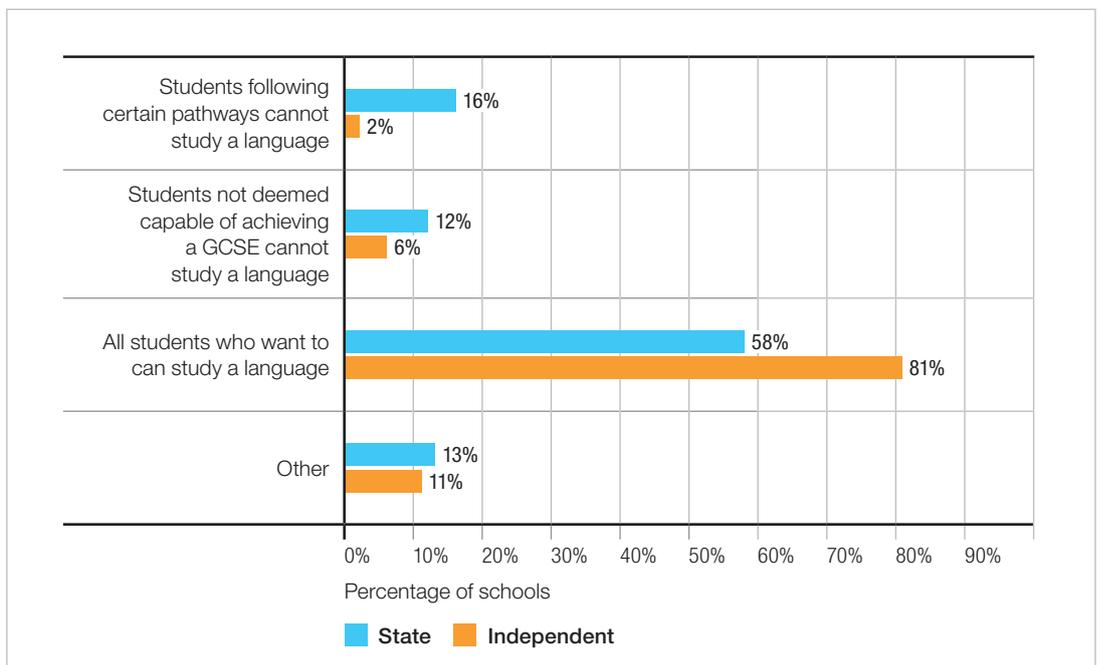
Anecdotal evidence from a number of schools with high proportions of pupils entered for GCSE languages who were approached as possible case studies for this report, shows that whereas they have previously made languages compulsory for all or almost all in Key Stage 4, this has not been successful and they have since reversed the policy.

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

In 28 per cent of state schools, not all students are able to study a language at Key Stage 4.

In the independent sector, the proportion of schools where not all students study a language at Key Stage 4 is much smaller, at eight per cent. The vast majority of schools (81 per cent) allow all students to study a language if they wish to.

**Figure 40:** Whether all students are able to study a language at Key Stage 4, state and independent



In schools where not all students are able to study a language in Key Stage 4, this can be for a number of reasons. In 12 per cent of schools in the state sector (six per cent of independent schools) those students who are not considered capable of achieving a GCSE are discouraged or not permitted to take a language course at Key Stage 4. A selection of respondents' comments on this issue follows:

*'Some students are discouraged by leadership from studying a language as they may not get a C. This is not the decision of the languages team – we would like all who want to continue to be able to, in order to gain a skill and the experience, regardless of academic accreditation.'*

*'Those who require extra literacy and numeracy will not study a foreign language at GCSE.'*

*'Students are advised whether to study a language or not and many are dissuaded if they have a community language already.'*

Students who were previously disapplied from studying a language in Key Stage 3 also very often find themselves disqualified from studying a language in Key Stage 4 because they would be unable to cover the required material in the time available, as the following comments from respondents show:<sup>54</sup>

*'All are able to choose a language unless they were disapplied in Key Stage 3.'*

*'Any students who were disapplied from languages aged 11 (to do more literacy/ numeracy) cannot do GCSE later on.'*

In 16 per cent of state schools, and only two per cent of independent schools, the options system prevents students who have chosen certain pathways from learning a language at Key Stage 4. Comments from respondents to this year's survey illustrate this as follows:

*'In principle all students who want to can study a language. However, this year our option columns were reduced from five to four, with the knock-on effect that some children who had French (or Spanish) down as their fifth choice did not get to study it, or had to choose between studying a language and triple science, or a language and a humanity. Many achieving students who could easily have taken a language GCSE are studying other things instead.'*

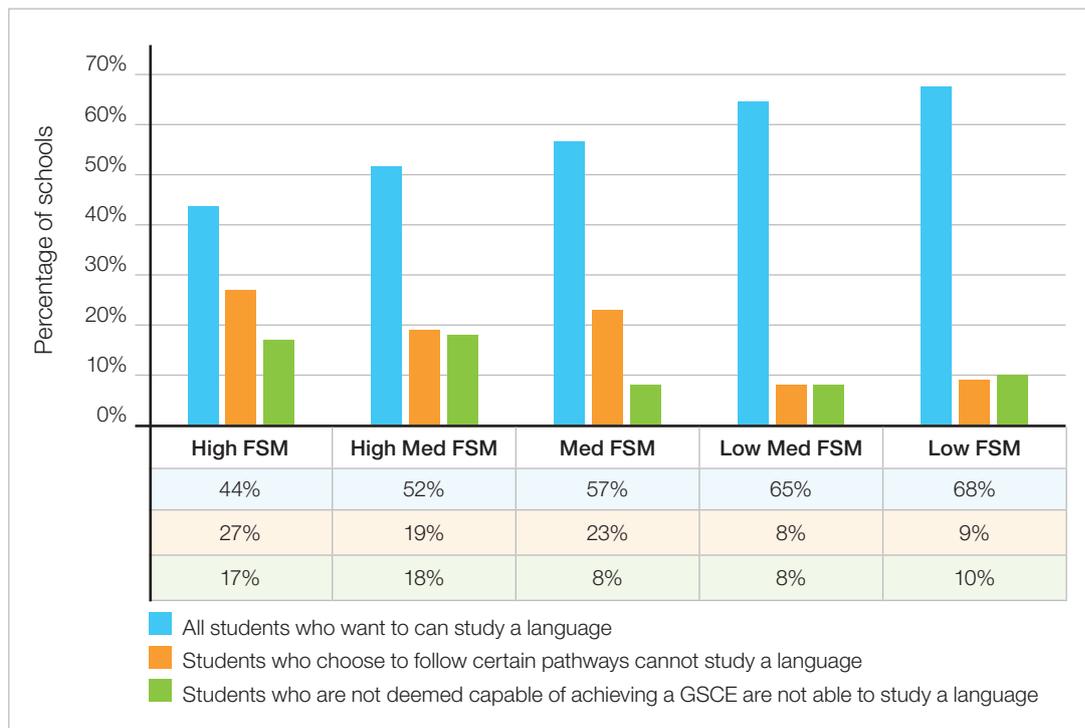
*'In theory all students can opt for a language, but in practice, triple science means that some of the more able students run out of options.'*

**Is exclusion of some pupils from language study at Key Stage 4 associated with socio-economic disadvantage, or with other characteristics of the school? (state schools only)**

An analysis of the responses to the question above by socio-economic indicator shows that schools with high proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals are more likely to report that some pupils are excluded from language study at Key Stage 4:

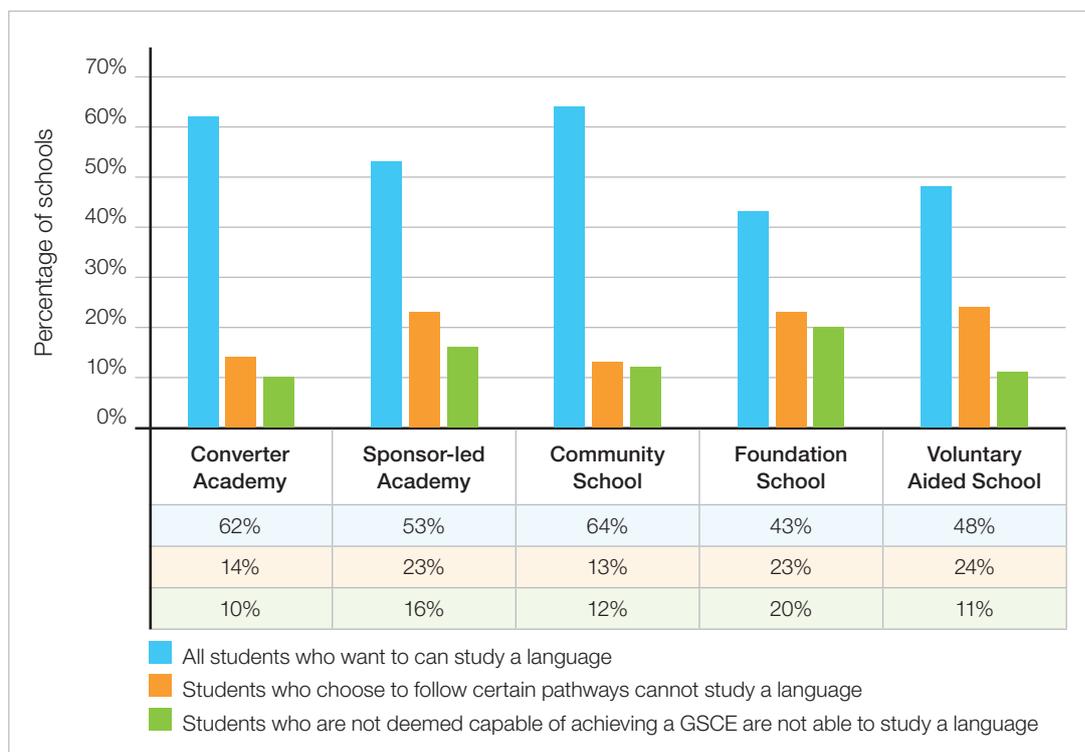
<sup>54</sup> See also the case study of Ravens Wood School (page 118) in relation to difficulties at GCSE for pupils who were disapplied in Key Stage 3.

**Figure 41:** Whether all pupils are able to study a language at Key Stage 4, state schools, by socio-economic indicator



Converter academies and community schools are most likely to offer languages to all students. Sponsored academies, foundation and voluntary-aided schools are more likely to restrict access to languages at Key Stage 4.

**Figure 42:** Whether all pupils are able to study a language at Key Stage 4, state schools, by type of school



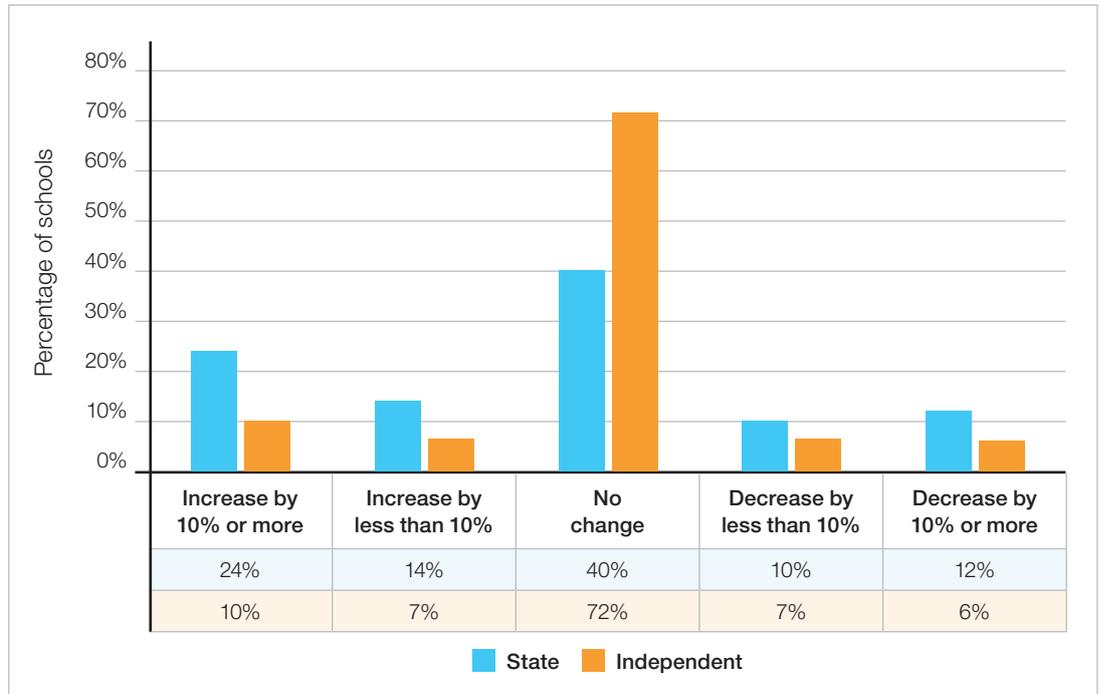
However, when the results are analysed by performance quintile, there is no correlation between the practice of excluding some pupils from the opportunity to study a language at Key Stage 4 and school performance overall.

### 6.3 | Take-up at Key Stage 4

#### Have schools experienced increases or decreases in pupil take-up for languages at Key Stage 4 over the last three years?

A total of 38 per cent of state schools have seen an overall increase in the number of pupils taking languages at Key Stage 4 in the last three years, compared to 22 per cent which report that numbers have fallen. In one quarter of state schools, this increase has been of 10 per cent or more. In the independent sector too, more schools have seen increases than declines but the fluctuation is less marked because three quarters of independent schools make languages compulsory for all students. These findings are consistent with the increases seen in GCSE entries attributed to the impact of the English Baccalaureate.

**Figure 43:** Changes in pupil uptake for languages at Key Stage 4, state and independent schools



Qualitative evidence provided by respondents to this year’s survey shows that the English Baccalaureate has been one of the principal reasons for increases in the numbers of pupils taking a language at Key Stage 4, whether as a result of school policies or because perceptions of the importance of languages has shifted because languages were included as one of the English Baccalaureate subjects:

*‘This increase was due to the introduction of the Ebacc – 60 per cent of our students are studying a language.’*

*‘Ebacc means that the increase has seen our numbers tripled.’*

*‘Promotion of languages through the EBacc, which was thought necessary to be able to enter the best universities. Profile of MFL department rising through excellent teaching and learning.’*

However, other reasons for an increase in the numbers of pupils taking a language at Key Stage 4 include the active promotion of languages within the school, and a focus on developing outstanding teaching in languages, as the following comments show:

*‘The Ebacc was a key factor a couple of years ago, but we now have a higher number of less academically able students enjoying Key Stage 3 language lessons and opting to continue at Key Stage 4.’*

*‘Whole-school policy promoting languages at GCSE for all students who may wish to do A Levels (in general) and thinking of a university course (in general, not just for languages).’*

*'We have a consistent team who have an excellent teaching background and who consistently teach good and outstanding lessons which students enjoy and make significant progress in.'*

Although this year's survey shows that more schools have seen an overall increase in the number of students taking languages at Key Stage 4 than have seen decreases, the proportion reporting increases is lower than it has been in previous years. In 2012, 56 per cent of state schools said they had seen overall rises in the number of students taking languages at Key Stage 4 over a three-year period. This dropped to 50 per cent in 2013 and further to 38 per cent in 2014. In 2013, one third of state schools (33 per cent) reported rises of 10 per cent or more, compared to just under a quarter in 2014.

The proportion of state schools reporting a decrease in the number of students taking languages at Key Stage 4 has correspondingly risen from 15 per cent in 2013 to 22 per cent in the current survey. Comments provided by respondents to this year's survey link the decrease in student numbers to changes of policy on option choices:

*'Current policy – that students should take languages or humanities has led to many choosing geography as the easier option.'*

*'The study of languages made optional – plus, it is not possible to study both three separate sciences and a foreign language. Numbers have decreased by around 40 per cent.'*

Other comments specifically link declines in numbers to the changed status or ineffectiveness of the EBacc:

*'Students are no longer forced to take a language at Key Stage 4 in order to achieve the EBacc.'*

*'Students were previously made to pick a language due to the Ebacc. Languages are now a pure option for Key Stage 4 and compete in line with all other subjects. Languages are perceived as being harder than other subjects and media coverage and information shared after the last exam series suggest that students nationally achieve less well in languages than in other subjects – so why would they pick it unless they were really good at it?'*

There are no distinctive characteristics of schools reporting a decrease in numbers taking languages at Key Stage 4.

The impact of these changes on individual languages is shown in Chapter 9.

## 6.4 | Take-up post-16

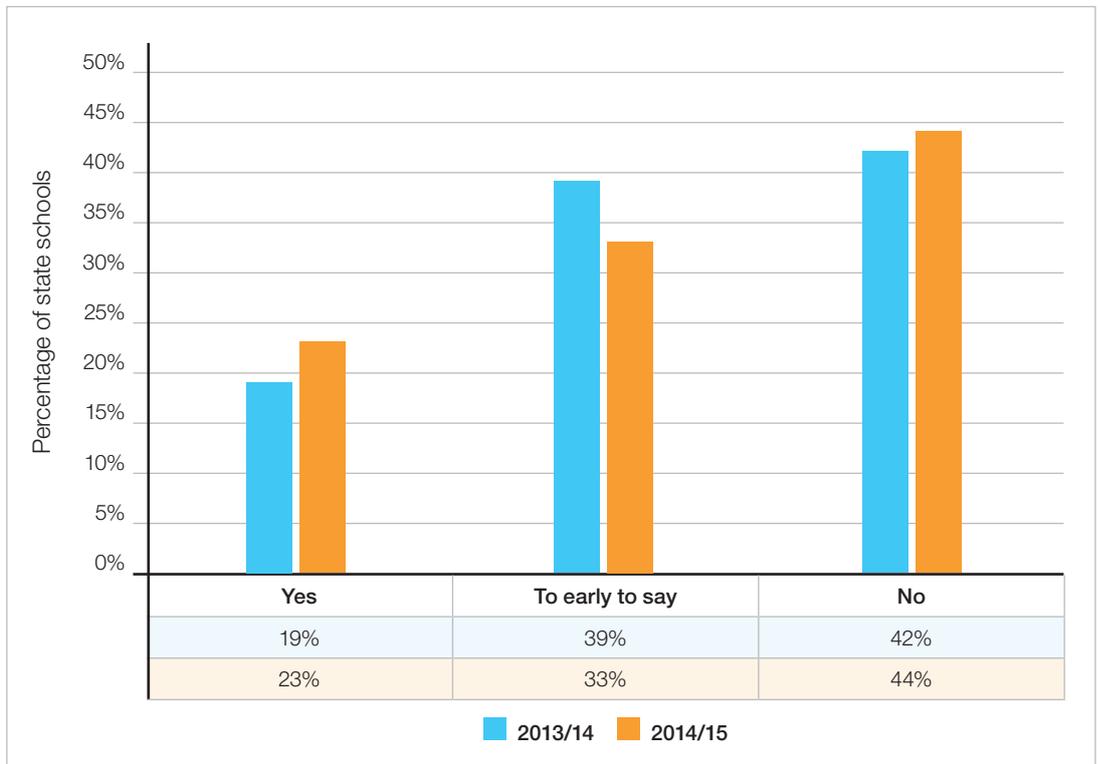
Just over half (52 per cent) of the responding schools teach one or more languages post-16. A further ten per cent have post-16 pupils but do not offer post-16 language courses. The findings set out below are based on the responses of all schools with post-16 pupils. The proportion of schools with post-16 provision which do not offer languages is 16 per cent.

### **Have increases at Key Stage 4 also led to increases in numbers taking languages post-16?**

This question was first introduced in the 2013/14 survey in order to gauge the impact of the English Baccalaureate policy on take-up of languages in the sixth form and beyond.

A total of 244 state schools report that they have seen increases in the number of students taking languages at Key Stage 4. Of these, 44 per cent say that this has had no positive impact on the take-up of languages post-16 and a third (33 per cent) say it is too early to say. However, 23 per cent say that there has been a positive impact on take-up post-16.

**Figure 44:** Whether increases in take-up for languages at Key Stage 4 have also led to increases at post-16, state schools, 2013 and 2014



The number of independent schools reporting increases is too small to be able to present answers as a percentage. Of the 46 responses, 17 say that there has been no positive impact, 16 say it is too early to say, and 13 say the increase in numbers at Key Stage 4 has also led to increases post-16.

Compared to the responses to this question in the 2013 survey, a slightly higher percentage of schools now say that there has either been a positive impact or that there has been no impact at post-16. As these comments indicate, schools have to work hard to maintain and increase numbers for different languages post-16:

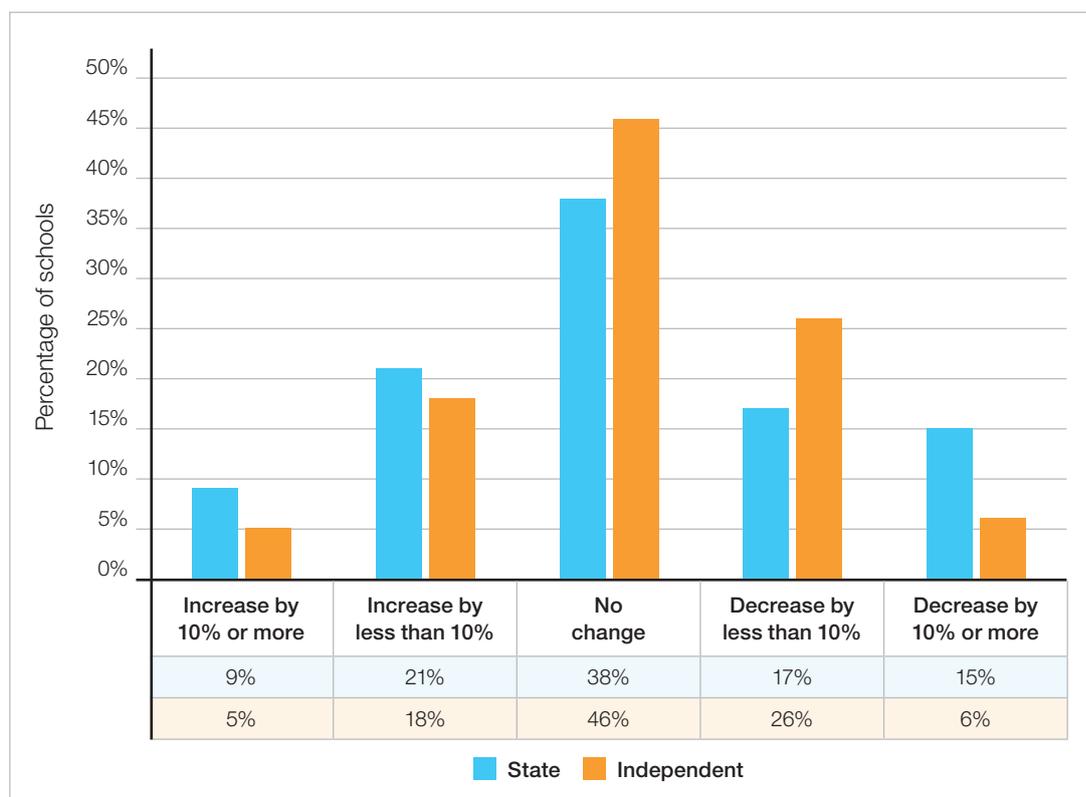
*‘Our numbers at A level remain good to very good. Our percentage take-up at GCSE has remained constant for the last few years.’*

*‘We tend to have between five and eight for German now as opposed to two to three a few years ago. No change recently with French: no students last year and one this year.’*

*'No increase in German and French, however annual increases in Spanish, which doubled our numbers of students studying languages in the sixth form.'*

**Have schools experienced increases or decreases in pupil take-up for languages at post-16/sixth form over the last three years?**

**Figure 45:** Percentages of schools reporting increases or decreases in pupil numbers for languages post-16 over the last three years, state and independent



In the state sector, a total of 30 per cent of schools say they have seen a rise in the number of students taking languages post-16, compared to 32 per cent which have seen a decline. However, the declines generally affect larger numbers of pupils than the increases, with 15 per cent of state schools seeing numbers decline by more than 10 per cent over the past three years.

In the independent sector, 23 per cent of schools report having seen an increase in the number of students taking languages post-16, but nearly one third of independent schools (32 per cent) have seen a decline.

These figures, which show a continuing decline in the numbers of students studying a language post-16, highlight a continuing need for concern over take-up of languages at A level. This need for concern was confirmed in discussions with teachers in the case study schools. While some schools in both the independent and state sectors have seen the number of students opting to study a language beyond GCSE increase, there are a number of issues which, in combination, adversely

affect student choice for A level study. As the following comments illustrate, these include students' perception that languages are more difficult than other subjects and that it is harder to achieve good grades in languages than in other academic subjects.

*'Many have the feeling that languages are too difficult at this level and choose "easier" subjects.'*

*'Pupils find the subject hard and their main interests are in English/history or maths/sciences combined with an "easy" subject.'*

*'Students perceive languages as harder than other subjects and more difficult to achieve top grades.'*

Many students also do not see the relevance of languages to their future study/career plans, particularly when they want to study science subjects at the level of higher education.

*'Best linguists opt for sciences and maths and overlook the importance of languages.'*

*'Results are poor and students are not willing or motivated to study languages at GCSE level in the first place so have no interest in carrying on further.'*

The other key issue referred to by many respondents to this year's survey is that of budgetary constraints on schools. School leaders require courses at A level to have a minimum of around eight to ten students in order for a course to be financially viable. Languages traditionally attract smaller numbers of students and often, therefore, fail to run which means that those students who do want to continue with a language at A level have to find another school or choose another subject.

*'We need minimum numbers of our Year 11 pupils opting for a language for a class to run and they don't often opt in minimums of 10.'*

*'Numbers in post-16 too small to set up class.'*

Respondents also comment on the knock-on effect of the GCSE exam and arrangements for languages lower down the school:

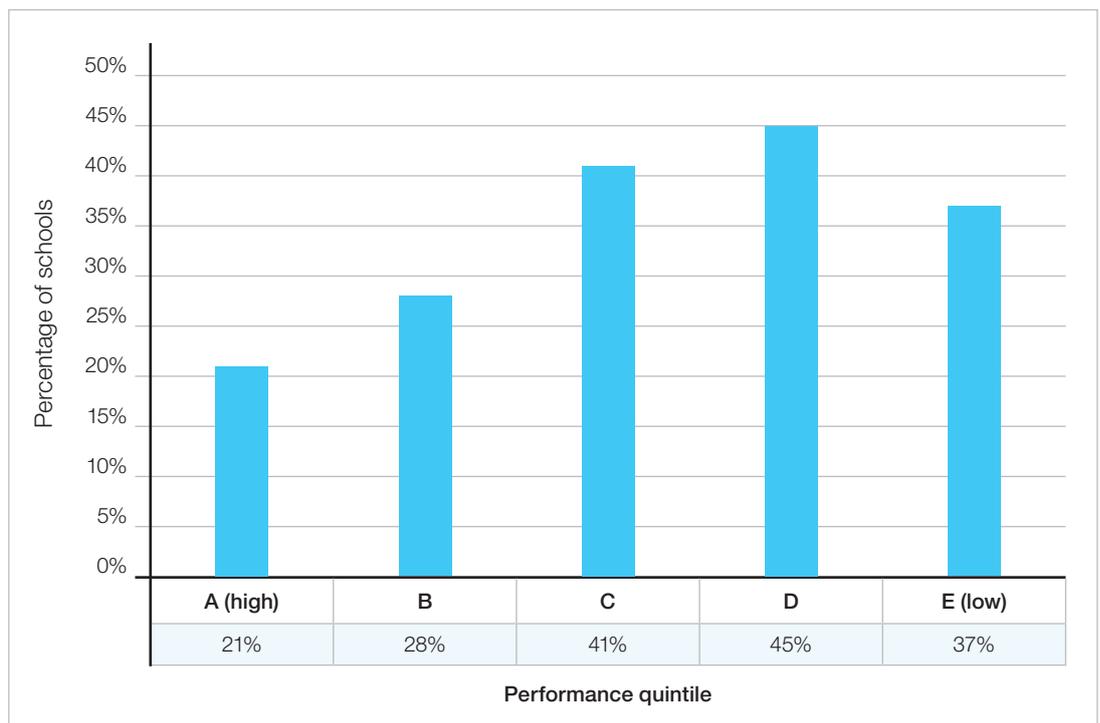
*'Numbers for A level courses fluctuate. Controlled assessments have had a negative effect on A level take-up.'*

*'GCSEs in languages are taken in Year 10 which adversely affects take-up at post-16.'*

**What types of state school are being affected most by decreases in numbers taking languages post-16?**

Analysis of these responses by school characteristics shows that high-performing schools are less likely to report a fall in take-up for languages post-16:

**Figure 46:** Schools reporting decreases in take-up for languages post-16, by performance quintile



The impact of all these changes on different languages is shown in Chapter 8.

## 6.5 | Key points

- There is a growing trend in both the state and independent sectors, but particularly in state secondary schools, to exclude or excuse pupils from the study of a language for a variety of reasons. In eight per cent of state schools, some groups of pupils do not study a language at Key Stage 3 and in 28 per cent of state schools not all pupils in Key Stage 4 who wish to study a language are able to do so.
- The practice of disapplication of pupils at Key Stage 3, and of restricting access to language study at Key Stage 4, is associated with socio-economic disadvantage. In the most economically-deprived schools, the proportion excluding groups of pupils from language study at Key Stage 3 has risen to 17 per cent and those excluding pupils from language study at Key Stage 4 has risen to 44 per cent.
- It is increasingly common practice, now affecting 29 per cent of state schools, to reduce the number of hours in the timetable available for the study of a language at Key Stage 3.
- The independent sector (86 per cent) is still much more likely to make languages compulsory for all or some pupils throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 than is the state sector (44 per cent).
- The number of English schools reporting an increase in the numbers opting to study a language to GCSE is slowing down compared to the percentages noted in the Language Trends surveys of 2012 and 2013 – growth which was attributed to the impact of the English Baccalaureate.
- An agglomeration of factors is threatening the future of language study at A level. These include student perceptions of the value of languages in relation to their difficulty, the impact of exams and arrangements for languages lower down the school, as well as budgetary constraints.
- Some 16 per cent of schools with post-16 provision do not teach languages at this level.

# 7

## Teaching and learning in secondary schools

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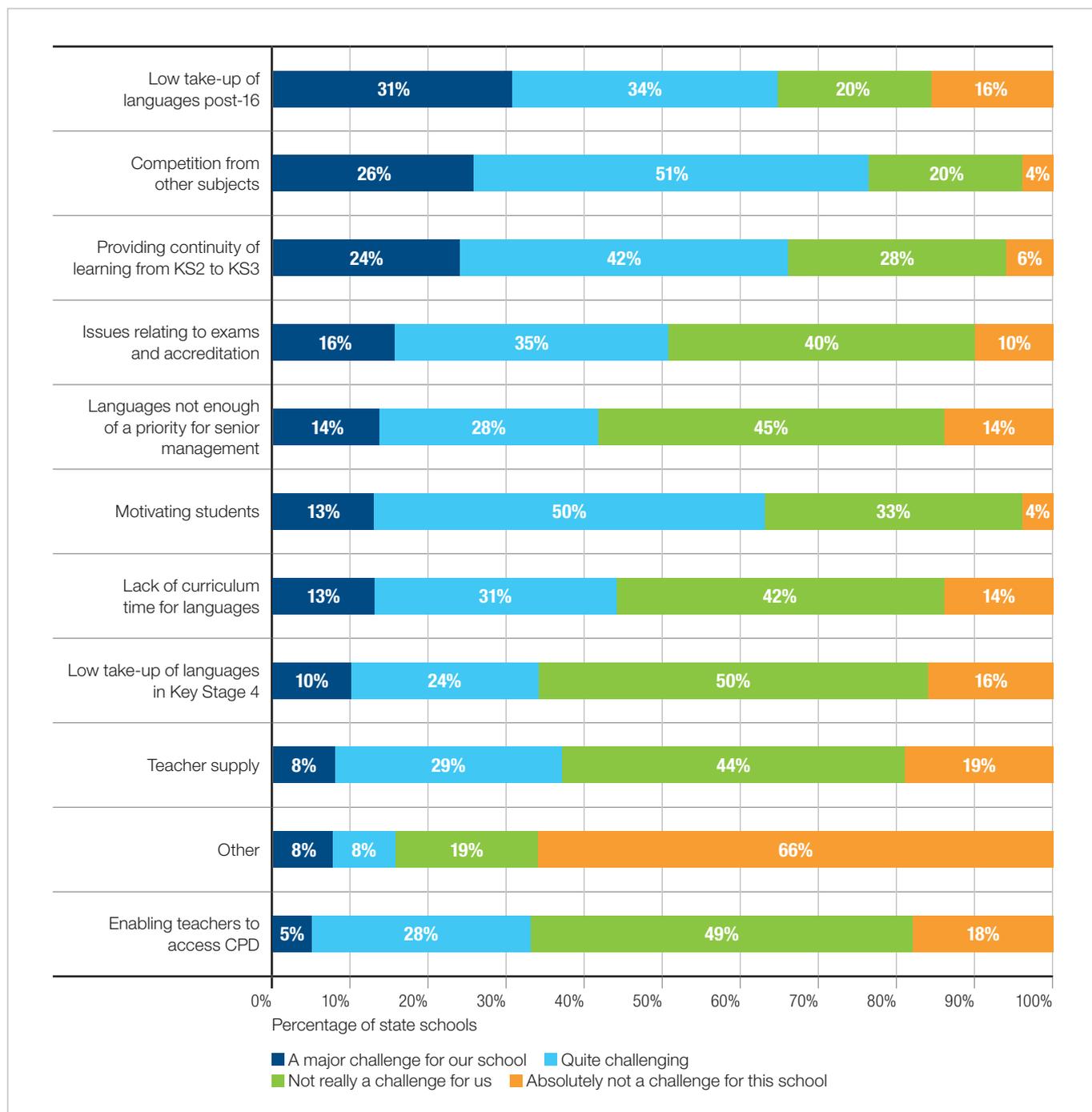
This chapter focuses on the complex and interrelated challenges faced by respondents in relation to language teaching in their schools, and provides further detail on issues raised in Chapter 6 relating to take-up and the popularity of languages in relation to other subjects. It also examines the opportunities for teachers' CPD to enable them to refresh and/or maintain their professional expertise. This year, for the first time, the research includes evidence from three schools visited as part of the research who agreed to be featured as case studies (see Chapter 2 for details of how these were selected).

### 7.1 | Challenges for state secondary schools

#### **What are the major challenges for state secondary schools as regards language teaching?**

From a prompt list of issues identified from previous Language Trends surveys, respondents in this year's survey were asked to say whether or not these were a challenge in their school. The responses from state and independent schools are presented separately.

Figure 47: Whether various issues are perceived as challenging – state schools



### Low take-up of languages post-16

Responses to this year's survey show that as many as 31 per cent of state schools identify the low take-up of languages by post-16 pupils as a 'major challenge'. Another 34 per cent find the issue 'quite challenging'. These proportions rise to 41 per cent for both 'major challenge' and 'quite challenging' in responses from schools which have sixth form provision.

**Table 10:** Challenge created by low-take-up of languages post-16

Total number of state schools with post-16 provision	Responses when asked whether low take-up of languages post-16 was a challenge							
	A major challenge for our school		Quite challenging		Not really a challenge for us		Absolutely not a challenge for this school	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
327	134	41%	133	41%	45	14%	15	5%

It is clear from comments provided by respondents to this year's survey that the picture behind low take-up post-16 is a complex one, with a number of different factors contributing to deter students from opting to study a language beyond GCSE.

Languages are seen by pupils and parents as more difficult than other subjects and a greater risk when it comes to the need for the top grades required for university applications:

*'Students are not opting due to the level of difficulty experienced at GCSE when there are "easier" A level alternatives.'*

*'The difficulty of the subject in relation to other subjects – it does not seem to be comparable with the skills expected in other areas.'*

The severe and unpredictable marking associated with A level languages examinations is a serious deterrent, particularly to able and ambitious students:

*'Take-up post-16 is becoming a challenge, as students are reluctant to opt for a language, since it would appear to be very difficult to access the higher grades at AS and A2 level.'*

*'Marking by exam boards continues to be extremely irrational, meaning that pupils work very hard for seemingly little reward compared with other subjects.'*

In schools where low take-up of languages at GCSE has reduced the pool of students for sixth form study, the viability of languages as A level subjects is being brought into question:

*'Obviously low numbers at GCSE means low numbers at AS and A2 levels. Then we are told that they may stop us teaching Key Stage 5 languages because it is not economically viable.'*

*'Our A level provision has now been discontinued completely due to low uptake. It has been deemed no longer financially viable.'*

Subjects such as mathematics and the sciences are seen as having a more immediate relevance for university and subsequent careers:

*'Our main concern is post-16. Students tend to choose a language as an AS alongside sciences with the intention of dropping it at A2, therefore retention is difficult. With the new measures brought in by the government for next year, this could mean we lose a lot of students at AS as they tend to choose the sciences.'*

*'We have a major problem with recruitment and retention from AS to A2, because at our very academic school so many pupils want to become doctors/vets and don't see a language as important as continuing with three sciences.'*

The value of languages is either not understood or underappreciated by many of those who influence young people on their choices of subjects to study, particularly employers, university leaders, parents and the media:

*'A continuing perception that languages are less important for good university and career opportunities.'*

### **Competition from other subjects**

The comments above show that the issue of low take-up for languages is closely connected to competition from other subjects, an issue identified as a 'major challenge' by 26 per cent of state schools, and as 'quite challenging' by a further 51 per cent, meaning that in total more than three quarters of state schools see this as a concern. However, competition manifests itself in a number of different forms, ranging from other subjects which are deemed to be more important being given more curriculum time to the perceived difficulty of languages by pupils making choices at GCSE and A level and the need for schools to score well in performance tables. Some of the qualitative evidence provided by respondents to the survey illustrates these concerns:

*'Many of our students study maths and two sciences at AS level, therefore it is a real challenge to compete against other subjects for their fourth subject (history, ICT, etc.). With the introduction of the new A level where students will only be doing three A levels right from Year 12, it will get increasingly difficult to have languages as a viable subject.'*

*'Results and data are the most important factors in our school. If a subject is not performing as well as others then it is in danger of being cut.'*

*'Competition from easier subjects at A level – students make rational decisions based on what grades they are likely to get.'*

One school reports that the preference of high-achieving students for sciences has had an unusual impact on the profile of those taking languages at GCSE:

*'It is not possible to study both three separate sciences and a foreign language. This means that, atypically, our cohorts have contracted to the middle of the ability range, rather than the common pattern of languages retreating into the top band.'*

Competition between languages can also be an issue:

*'Some competition between languages (pupils have almost free choice of second language at Key Stage 3).'*

### **Continuity of learning between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3**

The issue of providing suitable progression from primary school emerges as another challenge for state secondary language departments. A total of 66 per cent of responding schools marked the topic as either 'a major challenge for our school' or 'quite challenging'. Comments here reflect the issues covered in Chapter 5 relating to the level and variability of language provision in primary schools and its impact on effective transition to Key Stage 3:

*'Key Stage 2 to 3 is an issue – huge variation in provision – of pupils who SAY they've studied a language at Key Stage 2. They rarely are at the level they/their teachers claim. Mostly at noun level and very, very rare that they retain anything.'*

However, respondents also raise issues specifically related to target-setting in secondary schools, which does not take previous language learning experience (or lack of it) into account:

*'Our main challenge is that the targets set for our students are consistently very high in all subjects and do not reflect the students' previous experience. For example, able students in Year 7 are given a target of Level 6 – even though the levels no longer exist – and despite the lack of curriculum time compared to subjects such as maths and English, which receive 7 hours per fortnight and which the students have studied for ever.'*

*'Key Stage 2 levels for English and maths should not dictate what levels pupils should achieve in Key Stage 3 – we have 70 per cent targets of a 6a in French and Spanish for Year 7 students. Any linguist knows this is near on impossible. Some students have a higher French target than an English one!! The Head just says we have to do it.'*

### **Motivation of students**

Also high on state schools' list of challenges (63 per cent – combining 'major challenge' and 'quite challenging' scores) is the difficulty of motivating students in relation to languages. This issue underlies a number of the other key challenges for schools already described above. It is an issue identified in all types of schools: there are no distinctive characteristics of schools reporting problems motivating students.

### **Exams and accreditation**

Issues relating to exams and accreditation, closely linked to take-up post-16 and to competition from other subjects, are rated as challenging by just over half (51 per cent) of state school respondents. In addition to the references to harsh and unpredictable marking noted above, respondents comment on changes to performance tables which have resulted in the withdrawal of alternative forms of accreditation for languages:

*'Lack of an alternative accredited option for Key Stage 4 pupils other than GCSE is a major problem. Before pupils who would have struggled to pass GCSE very successfully took the ABC Practical Languages courses which carried points for the College.'*

*'GCSE is too difficult for most students and the NVQ course is being discontinued. We are looking for an alternative but is likely that languages will no longer be compulsory at our school as our GCSE pass rate is too low.'*

### **What other issues are perceived as challenges in state schools?**

In addition to the main challenges identified by a majority of respondents to this year's survey, there are also a number of different issues which are of pressing concern to smaller numbers of state schools.

**Lack of curriculum time for languages** is seen as a challenge by nearly half (44 per cent) of state schools. Once again, this is related to the impact of greater priority being attached to other subjects, particularly English and mathematics, and the targets being set within the school in relation to the teaching time available:

*'A lot of curriculum time is lost at Key Stage 4 due to priority being given to other subjects whereby pupils are taken off timetable to complete science or maths controlled assessments or revision classes.'*

**Teacher supply** is identified as a challenge by just over one third of state schools. In some cases this is a local problem – the high cost of accommodation is cited as an issue in the London area – or a problem for a particular language, Chinese being a case in point. Others cite the quality of applicants for teaching positions or the mismatch of their skills to the language provision within the school:

*'Stability of teaching staff a major issue. Younger teachers coming into the profession do not all have sufficient subject knowledge for A level.'*

The negative impact of unsuitable temporary staff was also highlighted:

*'As a small department of only three teachers, we suffered massively last year when we lost one member of staff through capabilities, and another member of staff left to take-up a post (promotion) in another school – we were unable to recruit good language teachers and ended up with two supply teachers for half of the year, one of whom was not a languages specialist.'*

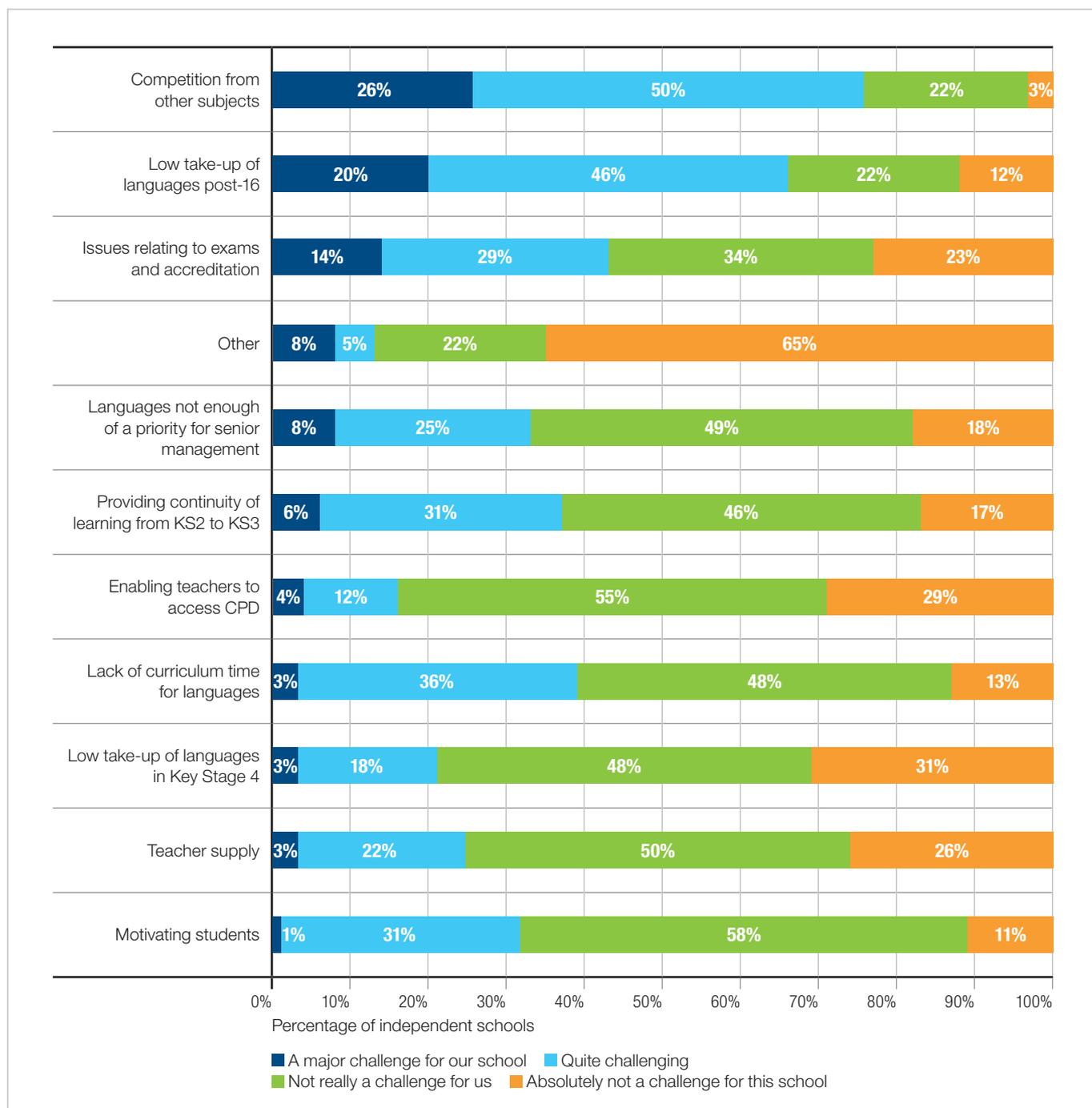
Another concern identified by respondents to this question relates to the general failure by those in a position of influence to recognise the value of languages and to promote the learning of them:

*'Pastoral staff can be quite negative about the value of languages when talking to pupils. If they did not do well in languages themselves at school, they tend to view them as unnecessary.'*

*'Languages still not a priority in media.'*

## 7.2 | Challenges for independent secondary schools

Figure 48: Whether various issues are perceived as challenging – independent schools



The two issues identified as most challenging in the state sector also emerge very clearly as the most challenging for independent schools, namely competition from other subjects and low take-up of languages post-16. Overall, more than three quarters of respondents (76 per cent) from the independent sector feel that competition from other subjects is 'quite challenging', and 26 per cent rate it as a 'major challenge'. Low take-up of languages post-16 is perceived as challenging by a total of 66 per cent of independent schools, rising to 72 per cent as a proportion of those with sixth form provision (not shown). Issues relating to exams and accreditation rank third on independent schools' list of concerns, albeit with a lower proportion reporting this is as either a 'major challenge' or 'quite challenging' than is the case in the state sector (43 per cent compared to 51 per cent in the state sector).

An analysis of free comments provided by respondents to the survey shows that the three issues of low take-up post-16, competition from other subjects and concerns about exams and accreditation are closely interdependent, as these comments illustrate:

*'Harsh grading at A Level is by far the biggest problem we have: it HAS TO BE ADDRESSED. Good students opt for psychology, classical civilisation, geography etc. because they know they have a better chance of a top grade.'*

*'Biggest reason for lack of uptake in A level is the low statistical likelihood of achieving an A\*. Students and parents are motivated by the A\*. Numbers for A level have been decimated by the very low A\* percentage. Even with the major review announced recently, it will take at least two years for the situation to change sufficiently for parents and pupils to trust languages in an AS/A2 portfolio.'*

The competition from sciences and mathematics is felt strongly in the independent sector:

*'Students believe or are made to believe that they need all three sciences AND maths to go to university.'*

As in the state sector, it is the perceptions of parents and careers advisers, and messages in the media, combined with the accreditation issues that are identified as acting as a brake on take-up for languages:

*'STEM subject preference perceived by many including careers advisors/parents – languages poorly marketed at government/media level in relative terms (and then usually purely as an economic factor rather than an educational one with wider implications for the nation's welfare, including a more balanced economy).'*

*'Outside pressures from parents, competition with other subjects and unhelpful media perception of languages not being so useful any more/ as useful as a science degree, for example, makes it a challenge in increasing take-up at post-16 level.'*

Comments also highlight competition between languages:

*'Managing competition between languages and ensuring survival of least popular (German).'*

Although **providing continuity between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3** is a challenge for more than a third (37 per cent) of independent schools, this is only about half the proportion of those in the state sector who see this as either a 'major challenge' or 'quite challenging'. The difference in rating between state and independent sector respondents may be due to the fact that many secondary schools in the independent sector have their own junior feeder school or sister school from which the majority of pupils transfer into Year 7.

With the exception of the two main issues which emerge as very clear concerns across all English secondary schools, a smaller proportion of independent schools report other issues as challenging compared to their colleagues in the state sector. It is also noteworthy that there is a considerable difference between the state and independent sectors when it comes to pupil motivation. Whereas, 63 per cent of state school respondents report that pupil motivation is either a 'major challenge' or 'quite challenging', only 34 per cent of independent sector respondents report pupil motivation as a challenge.

### 7.3 | Accreditation for languages

#### What accreditation for languages do schools offer at each key stage?

Although the most common form of accrediting language learning is by GCSE at the end of Key Stage 4 and by AS and A level post-16, some schools do offer additional or alternative forms of accreditation. Particularly of note is the 51 per cent of independent schools which prepare their students to take IGCSEs in modern languages at the end of Key Stage 4 – whereas only five per cent of state schools use this form of accreditation at this stage. A significant minority of independent schools, about a quarter, appear to have stopped offering language GCSEs altogether in favour of an alternative form of accreditation. Post-16, there has been a growth in the number of independent schools offering Pre-U courses as alternatives to A level – 15 per cent in 2014/15 compared to just six per cent in 2013.

**Table 11:** Forms of accreditation for languages offered by state and independent schools

	Key Stage 3		Key Stage 4		Post-16	
	State	Independent	State	Independent	State	Independent
Entry level certificate	2%	-	2%	-	1%	-
ASDAN	*	-	*	-	-	-
FCSE	7%	3%	3%	*	1%	-
GCSE	5%	4%	98%	73%	2%	6%
IGCSE	*	3%	5%	51%	-	5%
International Baccalaureate	*	-	1%	3%	2%	9%
NVQ language units	*	-	3%	*	2%	*
AS	-	-	4%	3%	81%	85%
A level	-	-	2%	*	84%	92%
Pre-U	-	-	-	*	1%	15%
Other	6%	3%	1%	*	2%	3%

\*Offered by just one or two schools

Comments from respondents in the independent sector who have recently moved away from GCSE and/or A levels to alternative types of accreditation show greater satisfaction with these examinations:

*'Very satisfied indeed with IGCSE and Pre-U. These courses are more intellectually demanding and have the advantage of being free from government interference.'*

*'We changed to IGCSE recently to avoid controlled assessments, which we felt were detrimental to the students. We are much happier.'*

In the state sector, there has been a continuing decline in the proportions of schools offering accreditation such as FCSE and NVQ language units at Key Stage 3 or Key Stage 4. In 2013 a total of 12 per cent of state secondary schools reported that they offered FCSE at Key Stage 3 (compared to seven per cent in this survey) and five per cent at Key Stage 4 (down to three per cent in this survey). Some six per cent offered NVQ language units at Key Stage 4 (down to three per cent in this survey). This reflects current government policy not to recognise these alternative accreditations in performance tables, whereas they had been promoted by the previous Labour government as a way of motivating greater numbers of pupils to continue to study a language. At their height, nearly half of state schools (47 per cent) offered alternative accreditation to GCSE in languages.<sup>55</sup> Asset Languages accreditation, offered by 18 per cent of schools at Key Stage 3 at its height in 2008, was withdrawn at the end of 2013. However, the proportion of state schools offering GCSE as accreditation in Key Stage 3 has remained constant between 2013 and 2014 at five per cent.

From the qualitative data available, opinions on accreditation are divided. Some respondents express satisfaction with the examinations for which they are preparing their pupils, for example:

*'We used to offer FCSE at Key Stage 3 but this was discontinued when the qualification was no longer credited with GCSE equivalence. We are satisfied with current GCSE/A level specifications and the accreditations that we offer to pupils.'*

Many others, however, are critical of the examinations used in their school. There is continuing criticism of GCSE controlled assessments, which are seen as variously demotivating for students, unreliable as a measure of linguistic competence, administratively complex and poor preparation for future language learning:

*'The GCSE controlled assessments have ruined the motivation of the students. The hours of preparation are felt as boring for the students.'*

*'Languages GCSEs are too unrealistic in terms of content and outcomes. Students work towards an exam and not towards skills they could develop in order to help them with post-16 courses or with learning a new language on their own.'*

*'Very dissatisfied with GCSE – does not prepare students for A level, encourages learning by heart, preparing for controlled assessments wastes too much time.'*

<sup>55</sup> Tinsley & Board (2013)

A number of respondents commented on the impact of the withdrawal of Asset Languages on different groups of students:

*'We want to accredit the Mandarin but removal of Asset Languages has been really problematic for us.'*

*'We used Asset Advanced for gifted and talented students (G and T) and haven't found a suitable replacement.'*

Comments show that the withdrawal of performance table recognition for other alternative qualifications has had an impact on opportunities to learn a language in some schools:

*'NVQ has been a great motivational course but as it doesn't count we have significantly reduced the uptake.'*

*'Disappointed when FCSE no longer counted for GCSE points – we used to complete in Year 8 and it motivated and gave those not continuing some useful accreditation.'*

Linked to this, some teachers would like to see the introduction of lower-level accreditation for languages which could be used with younger or less academic pupils or as a motivational stepping stone to GCSE:

*'We would love to be able to offer a different type of accreditation as this would motivate our students who are particularly weak. We cannot encourage some of our students to take a GCSE in languages as we know they would not achieve the magical benchmark of a C grade. We even had to discourage some very weak but very enthusiastic students as they would not have been able to reach the curriculum. Languages are regarded as highly academic subjects.'*

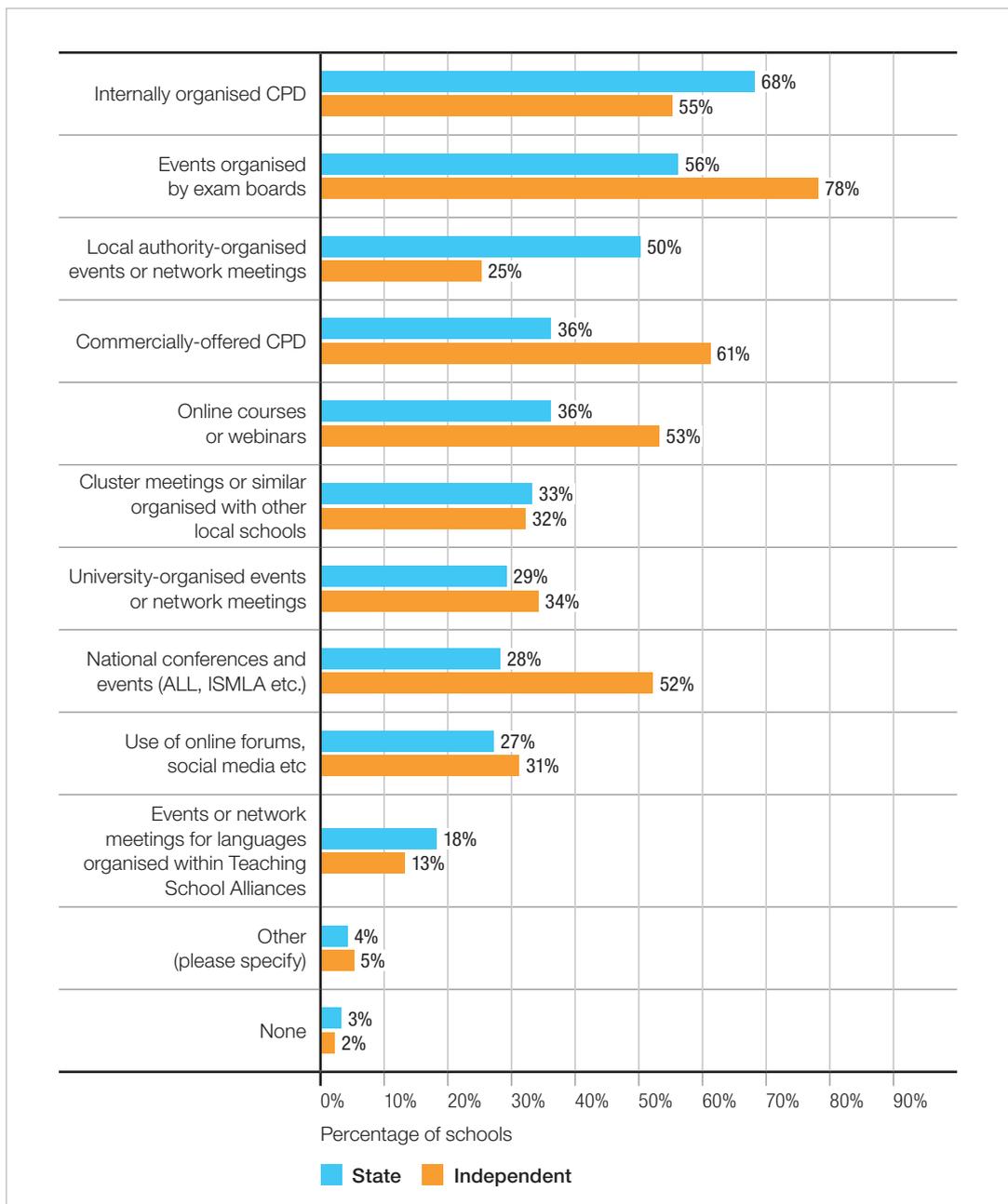
*'I would like a more nationally recognised Key Stage 3 or lower ability qualification.'*

Among the less common forms of accreditation being used by schools are the British Airways Flag Award (*'excellent experience for more able Year 9 students'*) and international language proficiency tests offered by the French and Spanish governments.

## 7.4 | Continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers

Which types of CPD have teachers in languages departments attended in the past year?

**Figure 49:** Types of CPD attended by languages teachers in the past year, state and independent schools\*



\*Multiple responses permitted

More than two thirds (68 per cent) of language departments in the state sector report taking part in CPD organised within their schools, making this the most common form of CPD undertaken by language teachers in state schools. It is not possible to say to what extent this is language-specific CPD or generic CPD for all subject teachers. The quantitative data from this year's survey show that independent schools prefer CPD events organised by examination boards or commercial bodies and are more frequent participants in national events for languages than their colleagues in the state sector. In comparison with previous years, there has been a decline in the proportion of state schools sending teachers to events organised by examination boards (56 per cent, compared to 66 per cent in 2013). However, since 2013 there has been an increase in the numbers of language teachers in both state and independent schools who report having attended university-organised events or activities organised with Teaching School Alliances/cluster meetings with other schools. Participation in events organised by Teaching School Alliances is up from six to 13 per cent and from 14 to 18 per cent for independent and state schools respectively between 2013 and 2014, but still only accounts for a small fraction of CPD for languages teachers nationally.

Qualitative data provided by respondents to this year's survey shows a wide range of opinion about what works and what doesn't work in CPD. Some respondents are enthusiastic about one particular form of CPD, for example:

*'The most useful have been those provided by the examination boards. The webinar was great and the commercially organised courses were good too.'*

*'Online courses are very useful and allow more staff to hear training.'*

*'Conferences are good to network/share latest practice too (Language Show Live, ILILC4).'*

Others report negative experiences of the training they have received:

*'Examination board CPD is of little use now, as speakers are basically unable/not allowed to say anything meaningful other than what is on their carefully prepared script. Some commercial events are good but many are not worth the fee.'*

*'We find that commercial courses are too expensive and often not good. We have organised our own CPD open to other schools and have a good range of training offered by county experts.'*

A number of respondents comment on the difficulty of accessing CPD for a variety of reasons including budgetary constraints, timing and workload, for example:

*'No member of the department has been allowed out of school for training. Only online training has been allowed. The majority of language training is now in London and our school will not fund the course and the travel.'*

*'We have been denied access to all exam board training by the Vice Principal.'*

*'There is significantly less CPD once we became an academy.'*

There is evidence that there has been an increase in the use of online media for CPD in the independent sector (53 per cent of independent school respondents using online courses or webinars compared to 47 per cent in 2013, and 31 per cent compared to 26 per cent use online

forums and/or social media). However, among state schools, the proportion using online courses/webinars has actually gone down (to 36 per cent from 39 per cent in 2014) and the proportion using online forums/social media has remained the same at 27 per cent. Those who do access languages CPD via the web generally find this helpful, while Twitter is seen as a useful way of keeping in touch and sharing ideas:

*'Recently been attending the ALL organised webinars. These are excellent.'*

*'Twitter continues to be very useful for us as a way of sharing good practice and finding out about new developments.'*

Training offered by the language subject associations, the Association for Language Learning (ALL) and the Independent Schools Modern Languages Association (ISMLA) received warm praise:

*'Local ALL events have been very useful.'*

*'ALL conference was a breath of fresh air. A very motivational meeting and discussing languages away from work and getting new viewpoints.'*

*'National conferences, such as ISMLA, are generally much more useful – and better value for money – than commercially-offered CPD.'*

Other respondents cite particular events or organisations which they have found useful, for example:

*'Princes Teaching Institute training and membership.'*

*'We hugely regret the demise of CILT – please bring it back!'*

*'Routes into Languages offer excellent courses.'*

*'The Oliver Prior society event at Cambridge was stimulating and great for networking, though not so much for classroom practice. Goethe Institut teacher training is brilliant! Almost all of this takes place in my own time and costs the school virtually nothing.'*

The growth of useful CPD events and training delivered through or in partnership with local universities is also mentioned by a number of respondents, for example:

*'Partnership with Bristol University PGCE programme offers very good, free training.'*

*'Our local universities generally have good activities and are able to attract good speakers.'*

## 7.5 | Case studies

### The Downs School | Newbury | Berkshire



Type of school	Number of pupils	Age range	Achievement <sup>56</sup>
Comprehensive foundation school	1,162 (Mixed)	11–18	69%

SEN <sup>57</sup>	EAL <sup>58</sup>	FSM <sup>59</sup>	Main languages taught
4.9%	1.5%	4.3%	French, German, Spanish

Percentage of cohort entered for language GCSE in 2013	81%
Percentage of those entered achieving A*-C	58%

Researchers conducted a semi-structured interview with both the head of languages and a member of the senior management team, and held question-and-answer sessions with around 30 Year 10 students, split between two groups.

#### Provision for languages

The Downs School was formerly a specialist language college and has a long tradition of good language provision. It was identified for a case study visit from performance tables on the basis that entries for GCSE languages appeared to have risen from two per cent in 2011 to 80 per cent in 2013. However, the visit enabled researchers to discover that the school had practised early entry for languages GCSE in Year 9, and had then prepared students for Asset Languages Advanced in Key Stage 4. This was felt to be superior to GCSE as a test of language skill, particularly in speaking, although it was not recognised as equivalent to GCSE for the purposes of performance tables. The school is not, therefore, in the position of having recently increased take-up for languages at GCSE as the data suggested, although its languages department displays many features of good practice and historically all pathways except one required students to take a language at Key Stage 4.

All pupils are taught French from Year 7, plus either Spanish or German from Year 8 – with equal numbers of pupils being allocated to each language. In Year 10, pupils choosing languages for GCSE can take either or both languages they have already studied. All three languages are also offered as A level choices. However, since the withdrawal of specialist college funding in 2011, languages no longer enjoy ‘protected’ status and, as is the case with any other subject, must attract at least ten pupils in order to run post-16. As a result of this prerequisite, German A level is not currently running, and teachers fear that French may also be vulnerable.

<sup>56</sup> Percentage of cohort achieving 5+ A\*-C GCSEs including English and maths. National average 59.2%

<sup>57</sup> Percentage of pupils with SEN with statements or on School Action Plus. National average 7.7%

<sup>58</sup> Percentage of pupils with English not a first language. National average 13.6%

<sup>59</sup> Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals. National average 16.3%

The Downs School 'languages for all' policy in which all pupils across the ability range traditionally took a language at GCSE, means that the results achieved do not compare well with those of other schools where only the highest-achieving pupils sit the examinations. As a result languages are seen to be bringing down the school's overall academic performance. To counter this the school made languages optional for some pupils in Key Stage 4, a move which has reduced the proportion of the current Year 11 cohort taking a language to around 50 per cent. However, for pupils starting their GCSE courses in September 2015, option choices have been changed again, giving them complete choice as to whether they study one language, two languages or no language at GCSE. This is likely to reduce the numbers of pupils studying a language still further.

- **A language-rich experience for pupils**

The school has so far been successful in maintaining numbers and enthusiasm for German at KS3/4, in contrast to national trends. It has also given pupils the opportunity to learn a number of other languages, including Chinese, Japanese, Russian and Arabic, either as 'enrichment' classes or in their own time. One pupil who studied Arabic in his own time went on to take the subject at university and now works for a prestigious international news company in Dubai. Pupils are very well disposed towards language study and able to see the value and relevance of language skills for their future careers. However, they are also very aware of the difficulty of achieving good grades in languages and the risks of not being certain of good exam grades when it comes to university applications.

*'Good students have their pick of subjects at A level.'* School manager

*'If I'd started German in Year 7 I'd have two years' extra learning and I'd be at AS level now!'*  
Year 10 pupil

The school has partner schools in France, Germany and Spain and offers regular exchanges with these countries which include accommodation with host families. Many pupils maintain contact with their partners via Skype and email. The school also employs language assistants for each language, which enables A level students to have at least 20 minutes of one-to-one conversation per week. GCSE students also benefit from the presence of the language assistants, but if A level groups do not run, this provision may cease. Language teachers commented that although so many of their high-fliers so obviously enjoy and are committed to language learning, political views expressed in the media advocating a withdrawal from cooperation in Europe are having a negative impact on pupils who are 'undecided' about languages, particularly those who do not see themselves as going on to university.

*'My German exchange made me realise I liked the language. I like how it sounds.'*  
Year 10 pupil

- **Building on language learning at Key Stage 2**

Year 7 pupils arrive in the school with a wide range of prior experience in learning languages. Most of the Year 10 pupils interviewed had learned some French in primary school. The school runs a transition unit in the first term with a strong focus on grammar, which aims to bring all up to the same level. Pupils reported favourably on this experience.

*'It's a careful balancing act in Year 7, but I wouldn't want to set pupils. Their perceptions of what they've done in primary often don't correspond to reality.'* Teacher

*'We just did vocab and phrases in primary. I never realised there were genders.'* Year 10 pupil

## Litherland High School | Sefton | Liverpool



Type of school	Number of pupils	Age range	Key Stage 4 achievement <sup>60</sup>
Comprehensive foundation school	879 (Mixed)	11–16	38%

SEN <sup>61</sup>	EAL <sup>62</sup>	FSM <sup>63</sup>	Main languages taught
20.1%	1%	31.3%	French, Spanish

Percentage of cohort entered for language GCSE in 2013	85%
Percentage of those entered achieving A*-C	83%

Researchers conducted an interview with both the head of languages and the headteacher and held a round-table discussion with members of the languages department, including the Spanish language assistant. They observed part of two lessons, held a question-and-answer session with a group of Year 8 pupils and a focus group discussion with a group of ten current and former pupils from across the school and the nearby sixth form college.

### Provision for languages

Litherland High School is a former specialist language college which no longer advertises itself as such. It works in challenging circumstances in a white, working-class, monolingual community in an area of high deprivation and its language results at GCSE have consistently outshone its overall end-of-Key-Stage-4 results. It is currently in special measures and undergoing major changes as an Interim Executive Board and new headteacher designate implement school improvement plans. However, in a national context in which the study of languages to GCSE is increasingly seen as the realm of an academic and socio-economic élite, or boosted by the multilingualism of a diverse student population, Litherland's language department provides an inspiring example of what can be achieved in unpromising circumstances.

All pupils at Litherland learn Spanish from Years 7 to 10 and take GCSE at the end of Year 10. Some 85 per cent of the cohort sat at least one language GCSE in 2013. In Years 8 and 9 all pupils also study French and around one quarter of the cohort then choose to take it to GCSE. German and Chinese are also offered as two-year GCSE courses. Students who achieve good results in Spanish GCSE are offered AS in Year 11; others do GCSE in leisure and tourism or can retake their Spanish. The progression route for most pupils at 16 is Sefton Sixth Form College which has developed its own languages offer to meet the high demand from pupils coming from Litherland High School, who account for about 70 per cent of its intake to language A level courses.

<sup>60</sup> Percentage of cohort achieving 5+ A\*-C GCSEs including English and maths. National average 59.2%

<sup>61</sup> Percentage of pupils with SEN with statements or on School Action Plus. National average 7.7%

<sup>62</sup> Percentage of pupils with English not a first language. National average 13.6%

<sup>63</sup> Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals. National average 16.3%

Litherland has 27 primary feeder schools, and staff from the Languages department teach Spanish in seven of these. The school also organises Easter and summer booster courses in Spanish for Year 6 pupils from its primary feeder schools who are not studying Spanish: the aim is to bring all Year 7s up to the same level within the first term.

*'Because of our work with primary schools and the summer school for upcoming Year 7s, the languages staff are familiar faces for them when they arrive here.'* Teacher

Pupils are all taught within their tutor groups except for a small group with low literacy who study Spanish in special smaller groups in Years 7 and 8.

The Languages department comprises ten teachers as well as language assistants from Spain, France and China. All languages teachers participate in both internal and external CPD (although the growth in multi-school academy chains has reduced the levels of cross-school collaboration in recent years) and funding is obtained through Erasmus Plus to enable teachers to undertake visits to schools in Spain and France. Despite the Languages department's evident success, the school's status in special measures means it is not currently able to take trainee teachers.

- **Raising aspirations; bucking the trends**

The decision to specialise in high-quality languages teaching was taken at a strategic level some 12 years ago because the headteacher wanted to dispel the perception of languages as an elitist subject and that only children from 'leafy areas' could learn languages. 'Languages for all' is therefore seen as part of the school's wider ambition to raise aspirations and parents have appreciated and supported this.

The school believes that because all pupils share the ambition to do well in languages, they become more demanding of themselves and of their teachers. They believe the key to the school's success in languages is the quality of teaching, positive relationships and a 'systematic, scientific approach' to languages teaching.

Pupils throughout the school are enthusiastic language learners and there is large-scale participation in a number of languages competitions including the 'Spelling Bee' competition run by Routes into Languages and an international online translation competition called 'Language Perfect' for which the school is currently European champion.

In spite of being situated in an area of high socio-economic deprivation, Litherland High School has run successful school exchanges since 1997 and has built many positive relationships for both the school and the community it serves in countries including Spain, France, Germany, China and the Czech Republic. In this way, the school has been the driver for a culture shift in the local community and has done much to raise pupil aspirations as well as to link pupils and their families to the wider world.

*'The teachers here just make you want to learn languages.'* Year 8 pupil

*'I am going to study Sports Management and after that I want to live in Spain and organise big sports events or work as a coach. I won't be able to do this if I don't speak the language.'*  
Year 10 pupil

Despite the fact that Litherland High School provides a compelling model of successful language teaching for pupils of all abilities, current provision seems unlikely to be sustained given the competing demands of core subjects:

*'I firmly believe that successful language learning has a positive impact on pupils' literacy. However, the double weighting of English and maths is adding a lot of pressure and making it much harder to justify the time allocation within the curriculum of so many languages.'*

Manager

## Ravens Wood School | Bromley | Kent



Type of school	Number of pupils	Age range	Key Stage 4 achievement <sup>64</sup>
Converter academy	1,487 (boys)	11–18	79%

SEN <sup>65</sup>	EAL <sup>66</sup>	FSM <sup>67</sup>	Main languages taught
7.2%	4.2%	4.1%	German, French

Percentage of cohort entered for language GCSE in 2013	81%
Percentage of those entered achieving A*-C	58%

The visit comprised an in-depth interview with the head of German, a shorter interview with the head of languages and observation of two lessons, including the opportunity to talk to pupils. The lessons observed were a Year 10 German class practising 'Group Talk' and a Year 13 French class who were using written work prepared for homework as a stimulus for an oral discussion about the film *La Haine*.

### Provision for languages

Ravens Wood is a non-selective boys' school with a history of strong language provision, although it was not a specialist language college. On entry to the school in Year 7, half of the year group are allocated to German and half to French, which they take throughout Key Stage 3. Until recently, they all received five years' teaching and around 80–85 per cent sat GCSE. This year a new arrangement was put in place for the current Year 10 whereby a language is compulsory in Key Stage 4 for the top two sets, and optional for others who show an aptitude. At the same time, a change of timetabling in Key Stage 3 has reduced the time for languages from three 50-minute sessions per week to two lessons of one hour.

The school is co-educational in the sixth form, and there is currently just one girl studying languages. There are four boys currently studying German AS and 12 candidates for French. Numbers fluctuate from year to year and teachers say that the issue of severe grading is a deterrent to students continuing to A2. With increasing financial pressures on sixth form provision, they see both languages as being under threat in future as post-16 subjects.

<sup>64</sup> Percentage of cohort achieving 5+ A\*-C GCSEs including English and maths. National average 59.2%

<sup>65</sup> Percentage of pupils with SEN with statements or on School Action Plus. National average 7.7%

<sup>66</sup> Percentage of pupils with English not a first language. National average 13.6%

<sup>67</sup> Percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals. National average 16.3%

- **The threat to provision from misleading performance data**

Despite the current high rate of participation in Key Stage 4, the A\*-C pass rate in languages overall is two points higher than the national average for boys, at 64 per cent. Results for German are particularly good. However, results for French and for low and middle prior-attaining students look less good according to the Ofsted/DfE performance analysis system, Raiseonline. This is because certain pupils received only one hour per week French at Key Stage 3, having been withdrawn for additional numeracy and literacy work. The current Raiseonline value-added methodology compares individual school results with those of all pupils who enter each group of subjects nationally, so the results of schools like Ravens Wood, where the cohort being entered for languages GCSE is two to three times the size of the national average, appear below par. The school had therefore been considering making languages an optional subject for all pupils in Key Stage 4, but, following representations from the languages department, has decided not to make any further changes to the options system at present.

The teacher describes the pressures of 'getting pupils their grades' as being 'on a treadmill' but is convinced that all pupils regardless of their abilities benefit from the practice of manipulating language, speaking in public and being exposed to aspects of German culture:

*'What they get from their language lessons is not dependent on their academic ability.'* Teacher

Pupils too admitted that they would have missed out on opportunities if they had not been obliged or strongly encouraged to continue with their language learning:

*'I wouldn't have chosen to do German if I'd had a free choice, because I had other priorities. But I enjoy doing it. I enjoy all subjects I'm good at.'* Year 10 pupil.

- **Good practice**

The school employs two language assistants. One is a French national who lives locally and has been on the staff of the school since 2008. The German assistant is shared with another school. The school has a thriving German exchange which takes 20 pupils per year from Years 8, 9 and 10 to a partner school in Leer, near the Dutch border. There is also work experience in the same town for those taking A level German. There are also regular trips to Normandy and Paris, exchanges with Brittany, and external speakers who talk about the benefits of languages for careers.

The school is an active member of Bromley Schools Collegiate, a partnership of primary and secondary schools which runs both initial and in-service teacher training. Staff within the languages department benefit from CPD organised by the group, as well as acting as mentors to trainee teachers.

Students observed – a Year 10 German group and an A2 French group – were active and enthusiastic users of the languages they were learning, in clear contradiction of the often-quoted stereotype that boys are not interested in languages and reluctant to speak them.

## 7.6 | Key points

- Two thirds of teachers see the difficulty of attracting pupils to study a language post-16 as challenging. This emerges as the most widespread challenge perceived by teachers across the country, more than many other issues including take-up for GCSE.
- Languages are seen as more difficult than other subjects, less reliable in terms of delivering the top grades and not important in the eyes of many of those who influence young people in their choice of subjects.
- Unsuitable or unreliable forms of accreditation and the priorities of English and mathematics, together with the perceived careers value of sciences, are creating a difficult climate for languages in schools.
- Schools with high take-up for languages where pupils of a range of abilities take the subject to GCSE, appear to be underperforming in government accountability measures which are based on achievement not participation. This is leading to cuts in language provision. Language provision in former specialist language colleges is particularly vulnerable to this effect.
- Opportunities for lower-ability pupils to study languages have been curtailed as a result of the decline of alternative accreditation such as NVQs, Asset Languages etc., following the government's decision for these and other similar qualifications not to count towards schools' performance tables. Lower-ability pupils may be discouraged from taking a language to GCSE in order to maintain a school's rating in performance tables.
- Many teachers are finding it difficult to access CPD due to heavy workloads and schools' budgetary constraints. Examination board led training receives mixed responses from teachers while technologically supported CPD and training delivered by specialist organisations and universities is praised.

# 8

## Trends in relation to specific languages taught in English schools

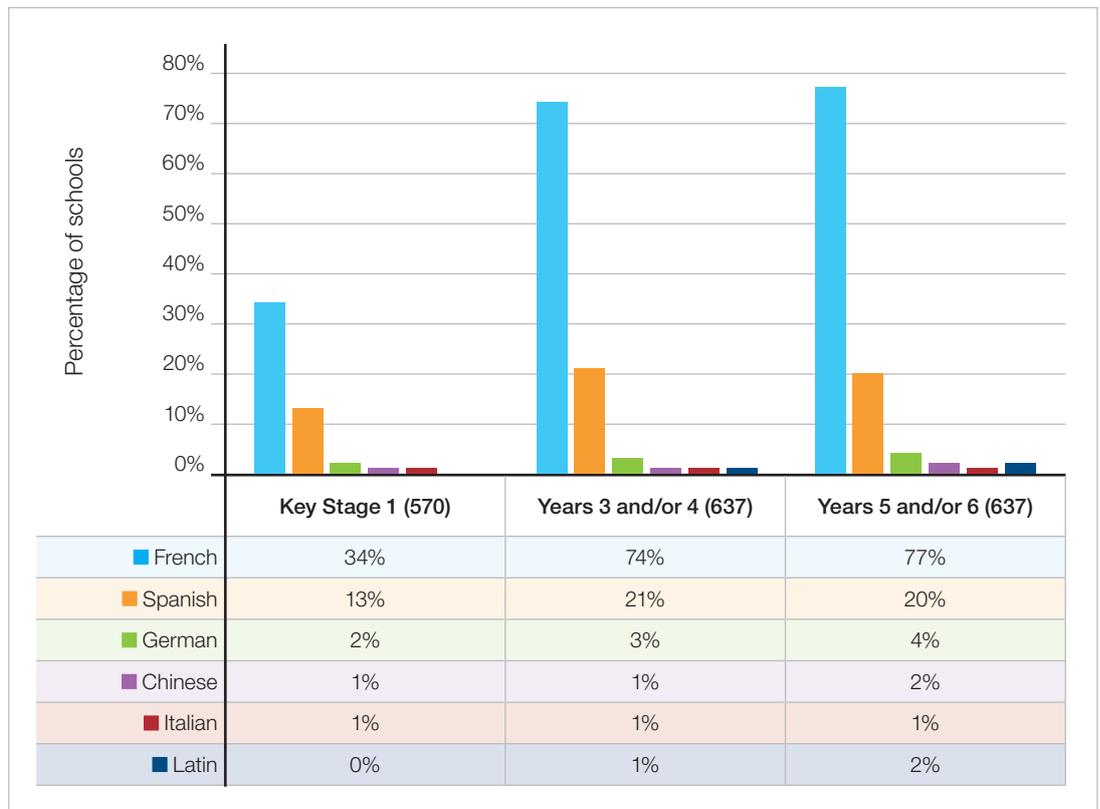
### 8.1 | Primary schools

#### Which languages do primary schools offer within class time?

Approximately three quarters of schools responding to this year’s survey are teaching French in Key Stage 2, and about one in five teach Spanish. Only very small numbers of schools teach other languages, including German which is offered by only 26 schools in this year’s survey (Years 5/6). The small percentages for Chinese, Italian and Latin (Years 5/6) represent ten, four and 12 schools respectively. No schools in the sample teach Japanese, Russian or Ancient Greek (the other languages in the prompt list) at Key Stage 2 but one teaches Urdu, one Punjabi and another Arabic. Among other languages cited are: Portuguese, Finnish, Turkish, Modern Greek, Swahili, Welsh and sign language.

At Key Stage 1, some 34 per cent of schools teach French and 13 per cent Spanish. Two schools in the sample are teaching Japanese at this level.

Figure 50: Languages offered within class time in primary schools\*



\*Multiple responses permitted

Schools do not necessarily offer just one language, as these comments show:

*'As well as the formal lessons in terms of a national curriculum subject which is French, we also have a German national as a teacher who runs a German club and teaches conversational German in her class. Likewise we have someone who speaks fluent Spanish and therefore pupils in her class learn Spanish throughout the year.'*

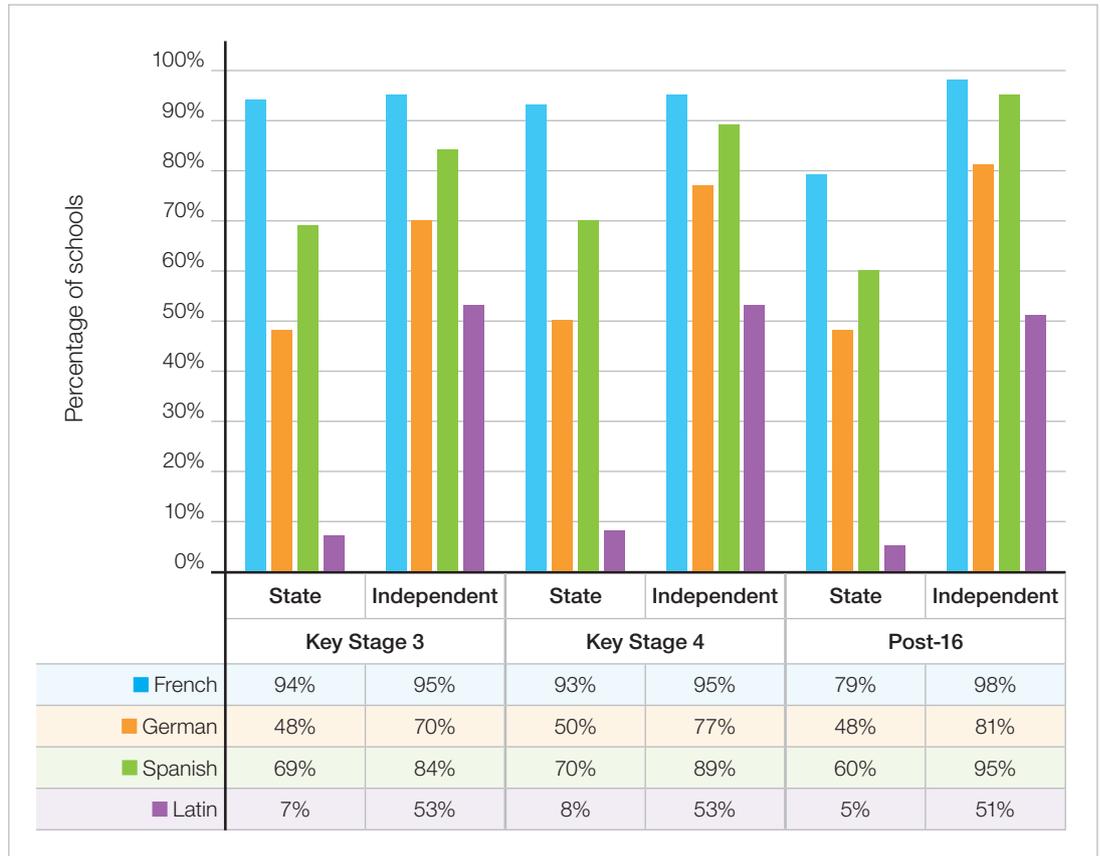
*'We are maintaining our multiple language approach as we feel it best suits the needs of our students who move on to multiple feeder schools and go on to learn a variety of different languages. We believe we give our students a broad base on which to build, give them a love of language learning and the skills to do so.'*

## 8.2 | Secondary schools

### Which languages do secondary schools offer at each key stage?

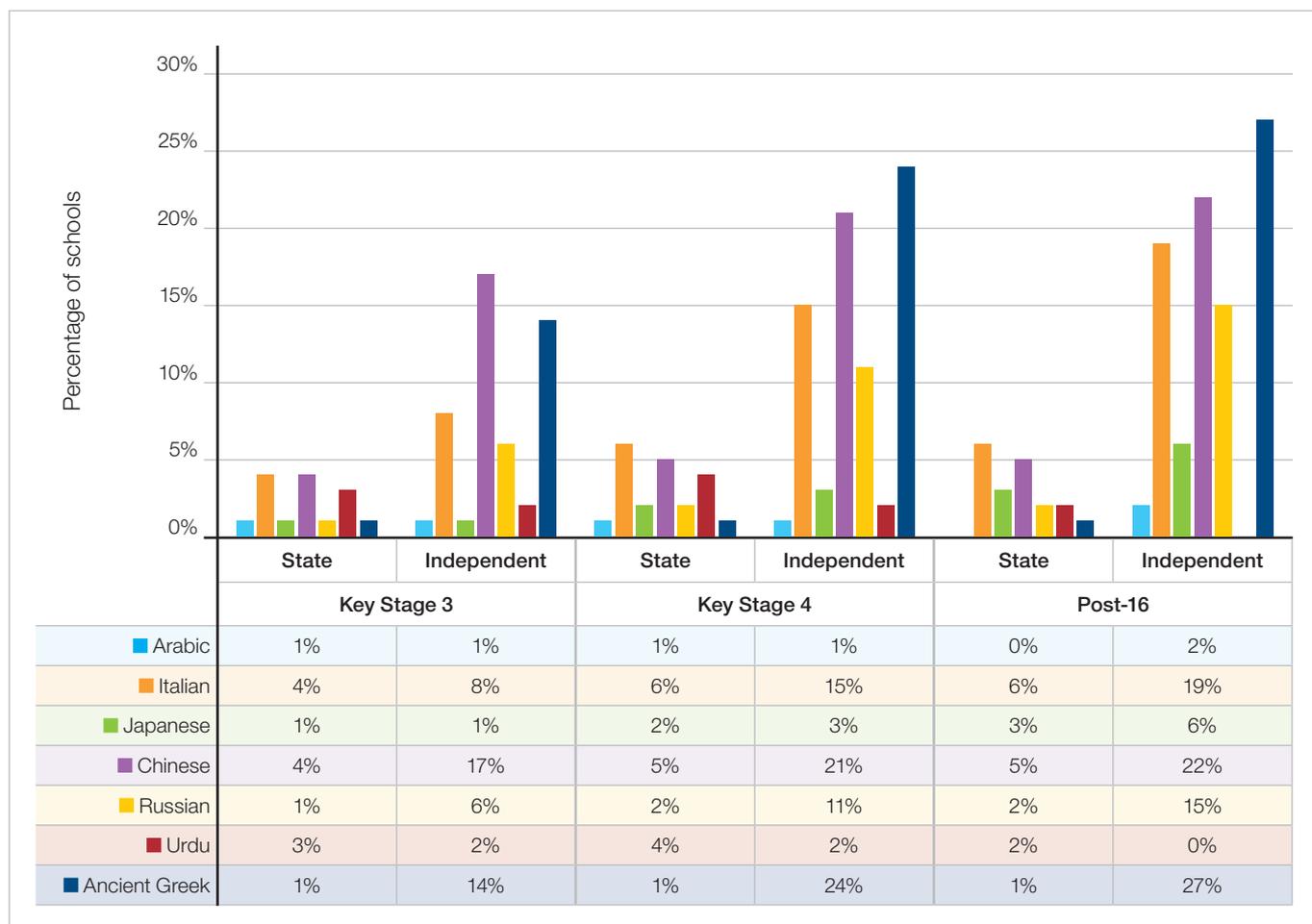
The main languages taught in secondary schools in both the state and independents sectors are French, Spanish and German. However, in the independent sector Latin is also widely taught alongside the three main European languages. The vast majority of schools teach French from Key Stage 3 upwards and into the sixth form if they have one. **Spanish** is the second most widely language taught and is offered by around two thirds of state secondary schools and well over three quarters of independent schools. In the state sector **German** is only offered by 50 per cent of schools at Key Stage 4, and less than half of schools at other levels. In the independent sector, German also occupies third place in terms of the proportion of schools offering it at different levels, though it is still widely offered by more than three quarters of independent schools from Key Stage 4 upwards. There is a large disparity between the state and independent sectors as regards Latin. While over half of independent schools offer the subject at each key stage, fewer than one in ten state schools do so, and only five per cent offer Latin as a subject for study in the sixth form.

Figure 51: Main languages taught at different key stages, state and independent schools



The numbers of schools offering other languages are much lower: these are shown below (please note the difference in scale between figures 52 and 53). In both sectors, Chinese and Italian are the other languages most likely to be offered, and in the independent sector, Ancient Greek and Russian. With the exception of the offer of Ancient Greek at sixth form level in independent schools (offered by 27 per cent of responding schools), no language other than French, Spanish, German and Latin is offered at any key stage by more than one in four independent schools, and in the case of state schools, no language other than French, German and Spanish is offered by more than one in sixteen schools at any key stage.

Figure 52: Lesser-taught languages offered at different key stages, state and independent schools



**Which languages do secondary schools offer outside curriculum time?**

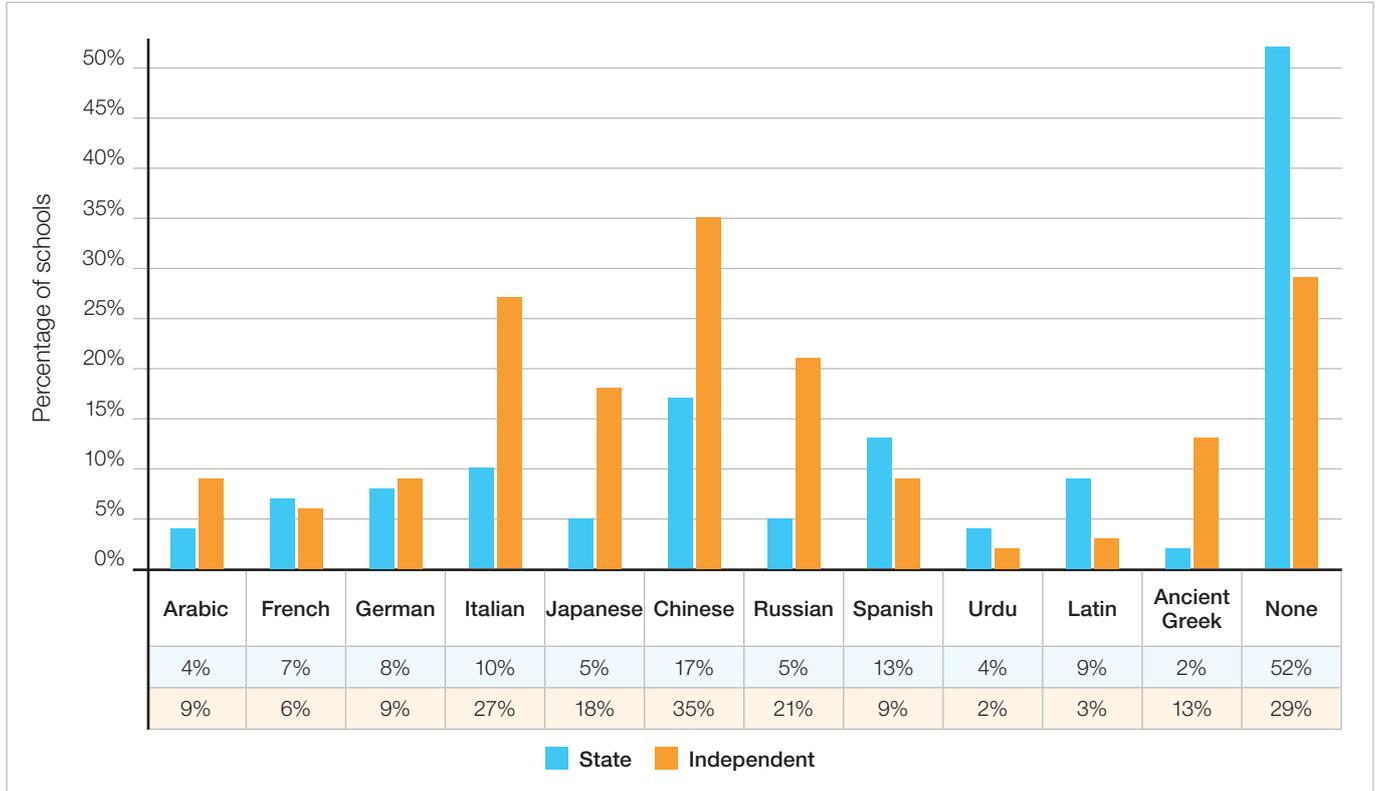
There is also a disparity between the state and independent sectors in terms of the offer of languages outside curriculum time. More than half of state schools (52 per cent) offer no opportunities to study an additional language outside the normal curriculum. However, although 35 per cent of independent schools offer Chinese and 21 per cent offer Russian, this may involve only small groups of students whose parents choose to pay for the additional tuition, for example:

*‘Tutors either bill the college directly (which then recharges to parents) or bill the parents directly.’*

*‘By arrangement with parent and outside staff.’*

*‘Specialist coaches in privately paid sessions.’*

Figure 53: Languages offered outside curriculum time, state and independent schools



**Changes in take-up for different languages at Key Stage 4**

Schools were asked about changes in their pupils’ take-up of different languages in Key Stage 4 over the last three years. In both independent and state sectors, the languages which have seen the biggest growth, either through increased numbers of pupils opting to study them, or through being introduced as a new subject, are Spanish, Chinese and Latin. As many as 46 per cent of schools in both sectors which offer Spanish have seen numbers rise and in the state sector, four per cent of those teaching Spanish have recently introduced it as a new subject. In the state sector, Chinese is a new subject for nearly a quarter of the schools offering it, and a third of those which were already teaching it have seen numbers rise. Latin has been introduced as a new subject in six out of the 50 responding state schools which teach it, and a further 13 have seen numbers rise. Numbers for Latin have also risen in about a quarter of the independent schools which teach it. In the state sector, as many as 28 per cent of schools report that numbers have risen for French at Key Stage 4, although 26 per cent have seen numbers for the subject fall. In the independent sector, there is a clear decline in the numbers of pupils studying French. As many as 30 per cent of independent schools report falling numbers for French and only eight per cent report increases. German continues to decline in both sectors, with a quarter of schools reporting reductions in the numbers taking the subject at Key Stage 4. Others, albeit a smaller number of schools, report increases in pupil numbers for German, but in the state sector 11 per cent of schools previously offering German report that they have withdrawn from teaching the subject at Key Stage 4 in the last three years. Changes in the number of schools offering other languages are too small to be able to draw any conclusions.

### Changes in take-up for different languages post-16

Schools taking part in this year's survey were also asked to report on changes in pupil take-up for different languages post-16. A very similar pattern emerges to that at Key Stage 4: Spanish and Chinese are expanding, while other languages are losing ground. In the state sector there is both quantitative and qualitative evidence that languages are being withdrawn altogether as sixth form study options. Nine per cent of state schools with sixth form provision report that they have discontinued teaching a language at this level in the past three years: this has affected all languages, including Chinese and Spanish as well as French, German and lesser taught languages. Schools are increasingly putting a minimum threshold on numbers for a course to start (see Chapter 6 above on issues relating to take-up post-16). The problem of declining student numbers has particularly hit German, Italian, Japanese and Urdu, affecting more than a third of state schools teaching these languages. In the independent sector, few schools have taken the step of discontinuing particular languages as sixth form subjects, but French and German have been severely hit by declining numbers. A quarter (25 per cent) of independent schools have seen their student numbers for French drop in the sixth form and in the case of German, 37 per cent of respondents report declines. Uptake for Chinese and Spanish, on the other hand, remains strong in both sectors at this level.

### 8.3 | Longitudinal perspectives on the development of individual languages

This section presents data on specific languages which have seen significant change as regards the proportion of schools offering them at different key stages over the eight-year period from 2007 to 2014 for which the results of previous Language Trends surveys are available.

#### Chinese

There has been a small but perceptible increase (from three to five per cent) over the eight-year period in the proportion of state secondary schools teaching Chinese within the curriculum. In the independent sector, the growth of Chinese as a mainstream subject within the curriculum has been more marked than in the state sector, showing an upward trend with the exception of the 2013 figures, which may have been due to the particular sample of schools responding in that year.

Schools which teach Chinese are finding a number of ways to include it within the timetable:

*'Mandarin has been brought in in Years 7–8. This is taught by an outside agency.'*

*'Chinese is offered in curriculum time for Key Stage 3, but some Key Stage 4 students choose to do it in the extension slot at the end of the day, 4–5pm.'*

However, Chinese is more commonly offered as an extra-curricular subject and the increase in schools (both state and independent) offering it in this modality is much more marked. Comments show how Chinese is often offered at the margins of the school day, involving outside teachers and, in some cases, very small numbers of pupils:

*'A person living locally who is qualified to teach Mandarin runs an after-school club.'*

*'It is provided by our British Council Chinese language assistant. It takes place in school after school hours for one hour per week, on request.'*

*'We started running Chinese and Japanese lessons after school when we had language college money; we still have the same teacher for Chinese but pupils pay a fee to cover the cost of the sessions.'*

Figure 54: State schools teaching Chinese at different key stages, 2007–2014

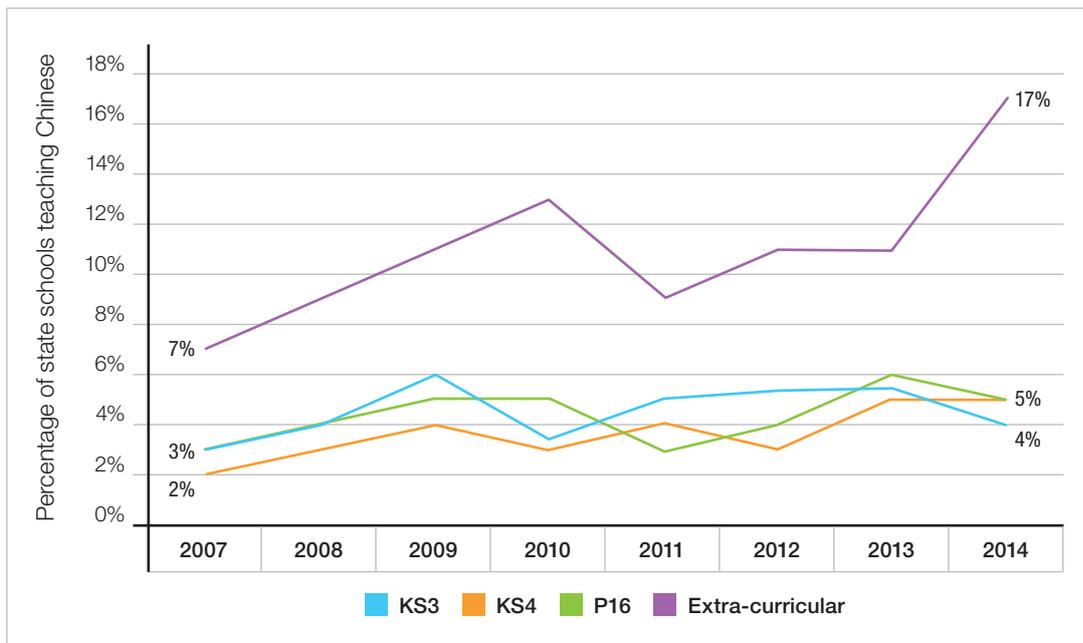
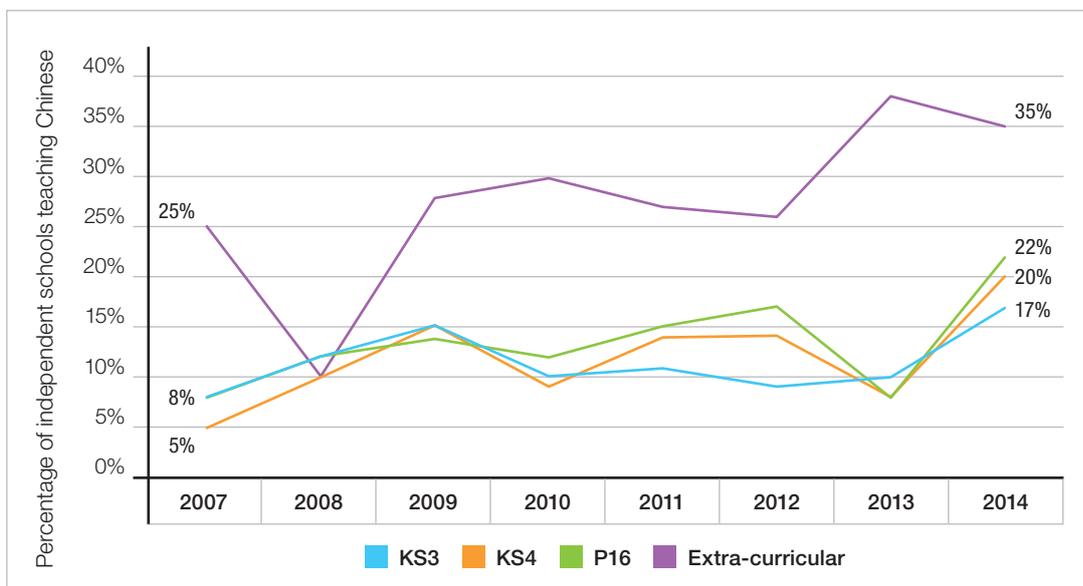


Figure 55: Independent schools teaching Chinese at different key stages, 2007–2014

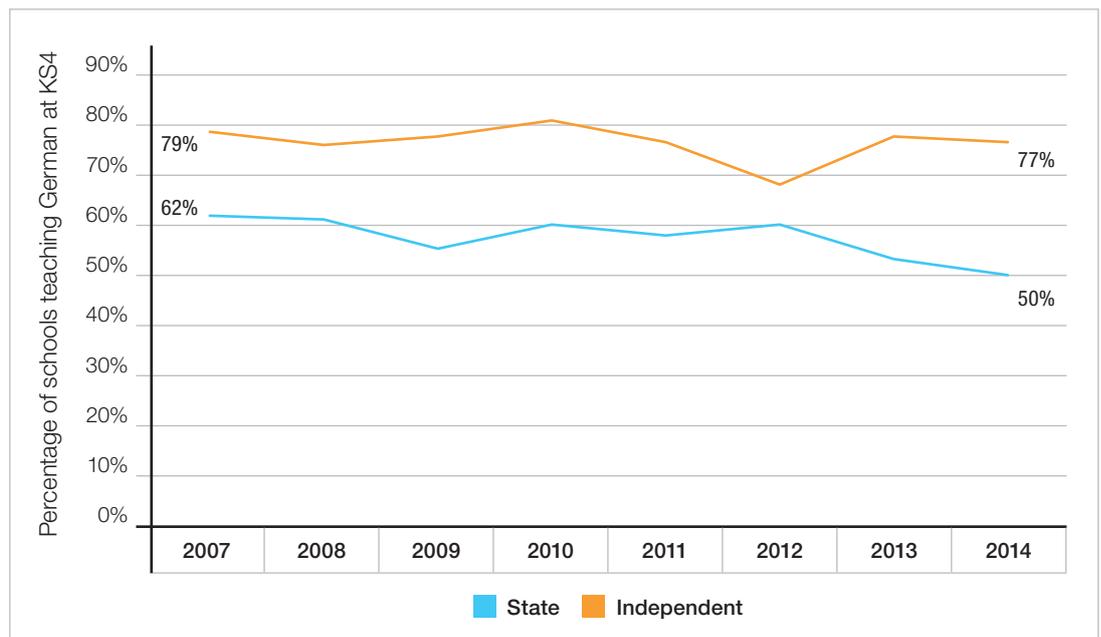


### German

As one of the principal languages taught in English schools, German tends to be offered far more frequently as a mainstream subject within the curriculum than as an extra-curricular subject. Eight per cent of state schools and nine per cent of independent schools were offering German as an extra-curricular option in 2014, a small increase from six and seven per cent respectively in 2013.

The chart below shows the decline in the number of state schools offering German at Key Stage 4, a trend which is also evident but not so marked in the independent sector. The trends for those schools offering German at Key Stage 3 and post-16 levels are very similar. In Key Stage 3, some 48 per cent of state schools and 70 per cent of independent schools currently offer German, compared with 61 per cent and 73 per cent respectively in 2007. At post-16, 48 per cent of state schools report they currently offer German, compared with 58 per cent in the 2007 survey. The proportion of independent schools offering German post-16 has remained constant at 81 per cent.

**Figure 56:** State and independent schools offering German at Key Stage 4, 2007–2014



Although, or perhaps because the number of English schools offering German has declined, it is the language which features most frequently in respondents’ free comments in this year’s survey. A small selection of these comments illustrate the vulnerability of German provision and the efforts being made by teachers to sustain it:

*‘German is now an after-school GCSE class for a few who wanted to do it after our headteacher decided to phase it out. Pupils pay for a session once a week and it is taught by an outside teacher.’*

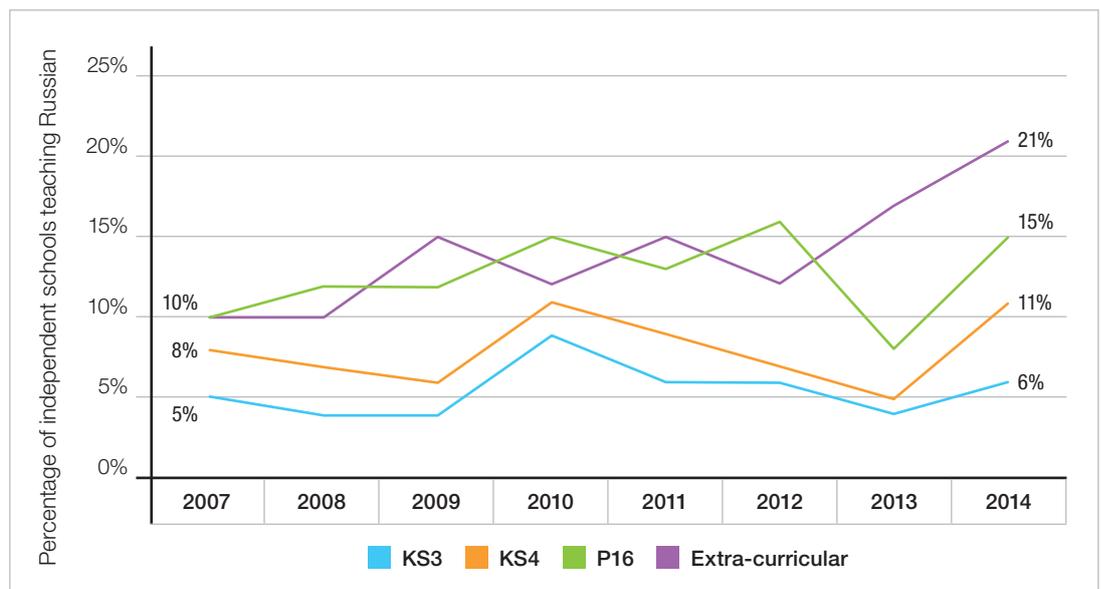
*'The introduction of Spanish has had a negative impact on numbers for German. We introduced Spanish due to parent pressure and because some of our feeder middle schools have started teaching Spanish.'*

*'All students used to study two languages – French and German. This was changed to just one language three years ago and German has been phased out, replaced by Spanish.'*

**Russian**

A very small proportion of state schools offers Russian – between one and two per cent. This number has remained reasonably constant since 2007, except for a small decline in the proportion of state schools offering Russian in the sixth form – from four per cent in 2007 to two per cent in 2014. However, a slightly higher percentage of state schools (five per cent) now offer Russian as an extra-curricular subject compared to three per cent in 2007. In the independent sector, changes in provision for Russian have been more marked, with increases in the numbers of schools offering the language at every key stage and also as an extra-curricular option:

**Figure 57:** Independent schools teaching Russian at different key stages, 2007–2014



One respondent commenting on the teaching of Russian in his/her school gives an interesting example of state/independent sector collaboration:

*'Chinese and Russian are offered by a local private school with which we have strong links and send approximately ten students to each.'*

### Spanish

The story for Spanish is one of fairly significant increases in the numbers of both independent and state schools offering the subject as a curriculum subject at every key stage. The chart below shows Key Stage 4 as an example, but the pattern is similar for Key Stage 3 and post-16. In 2007, fewer than half (43 per cent) of state secondary schools offered Spanish teaching post-16: now 60 per cent do so. Spanish is offered as an extra-curricular option by 13 per cent of state schools and nine per cent of independent schools. Figures for 2007 were 14 per cent and 13 per cent respectively.

There is rich qualitative evidence in respondents' comments describing the provision of Spanish in English secondary schools which confirm that it is a popular option, seen as less daunting than other languages:

*'Spanish is only in its infancy – first Year 11 cohort this year – only six students but all want to carry on at Key Stage 5.'*

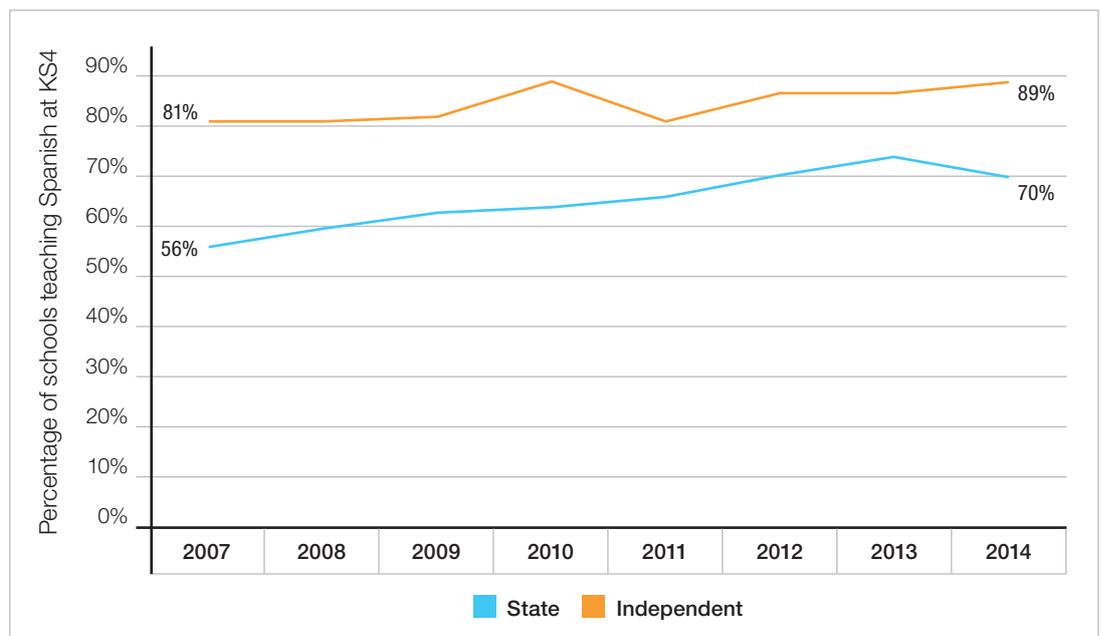
*'Increase only for Spanish which is more and more seen as an easy subject.'*

*'Spanish survived at the school as the attitude is that Spanish is better for low ability students.'*

The pressure on option choices sometimes means that students who want to take the subject to GCSE have to do so outside the normal curriculum:

*'Spanish GCSE after school taught by languages staff to students who opted for French GCSE but wanted to continue Spanish to GCSE without taking up an option choice, also to increase number of dual linguists.'*

**Figure 58:** State and independent schools offering Spanish at Key Stage 4, 2007–2014



### Other languages

Changes noted between 2007 and 2014 in relation to other languages are as follows:

Arabic has grown as an extra-curricular subject in both state and independent schools, although it remains a minority subject. It is now offered as an extra-curricular subject by four per cent of state schools and nine per cent of independent schools.

Italian has grown at all key stages in the independent sector, and especially as an extra-curricular subject, where it is now offered by 27 per cent of independent schools, compared to nine per cent in 2007. Higher proportions of independent schools than in 2007 now also offer Italian at other levels. However, in the state sector, a small number of schools are offering Italian as a full curriculum option, although slightly more do so as an extra-curricular subject than in 2007 (ten per cent compared to eight per cent).

The survey has picked up little evidence of change for the provision of tuition in Urdu.

In the state sector no schools report Japanese being taught within curriculum time but a number offer it as an enrichment subject or in lunchtime/after-school clubs. Teaching is provided by teachers of other subjects who have lived and worked in Japan in the past or by teachers supported by the Japan Foundation. There is less evidence of Japanese being taught in the independent sector though two schools teach it in curriculum time and two schools provide it as an optional enrichment subject.

Figures for ancient languages are only available from 2011, when the Language Trends survey was expanded to include them. Since then there has been a small reduction in the proportions of independent schools offering both Latin and Ancient Greek post-16 and as an extra-curricular subject. Numbers for the latter are very small and may not be representative. Comments show that state schools have sourced outside help in providing Latin as an extra-curricular option for some pupils:

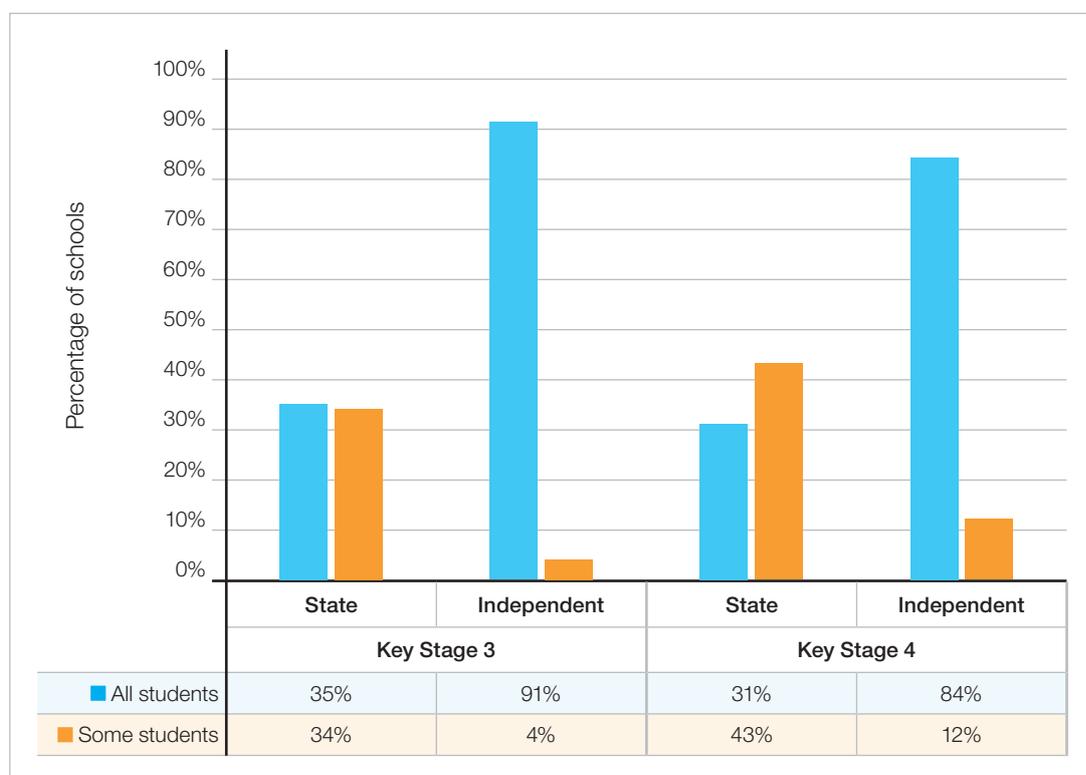
*'Key Stage 4 pupils study Latin at our local sixth form college once a week as a twilight leading to a GCSE qualification.'*

*'Latin club taught by a peripatetic teacher after school with GCSE as the target for some students.'*

## 8.4 | Opportunities to learn more than one language

The majority of both state and independent schools make provision for all or for some pupils to learn more than one language either at Key Stage 3 or at Key Stage 4, or both. In independent schools, this opportunity is available to all pupils at Key Stage 3 in more than nine out of ten schools, and at Key Stage 4 in 84 per cent of schools. However, only 35 per cent of state schools offer all pupils the opportunity to learn more than one language at Key Stage 3, and this proportion declines to 31 per cent at Key Stage 4.

**Figure 59:** State and independent schools offering pupils the opportunity to learn more than one language, Key Stages 3 and 4



Comparing these responses to those in the 2013 survey shows that that opportunities to learn more than one language are in decline in the state sector. In 2013, 42 per cent of state schools made provision for all pupils to learn more than one language at Key Stage 3. This has dropped to 35 per cent in the 2014 survey. At Key Stage 4, the proportion of schools offering all pupils the opportunity to learn more than one language has declined from 37 per cent to 31 per cent. Some of these schools are making the opportunity available to some rather than all pupils – the figures of 34 per cent and 43 per cent shown in the above chart have risen from 30 per cent and 40 per cent respectively. In the state sector therefore, there has been a decline both in the proportion of schools offering pupils the opportunity to learn more than one language, and also in the number of pupils within these schools to whom the opportunity is available.

### Arrangements for the study of two or more languages

In the independent sector, some 89 per cent of schools which make provision for pupils to study more than one language at Key Stage 3, and 88 per cent of those which do so at Key Stage 4, do so within the normal curriculum, where two or more languages can be studied concurrently. The rest provide teaching of one language at a time or, in a very small number of cases, second or third languages are studied outside the normal timetable.

In the state sector, the majority of schools (more than two thirds) which make provision for pupils to study more than one language also offer them concurrently within the normal curriculum, although this is less common than in the independent sector. Eighteen per cent of state schools offer just one language at a time at Key Stage 3, and 15 per cent at Key Stage 4.

**Table 12:** How provision for more than one language is organised in state and independent schools where some or all pupils have the opportunity to study more than one language

	Two languages or more can be studied concurrently within the normal curriculum		One language at a time within the normal curriculum (i.e. not concurrently)		Second or third languages are studied outside the normal timetable		Arrangements vary	
	State	Independent	State	Independent	State	Independent	State	Independent
Key Stage 3	70%	89%	18%	6%	5%	2%	7%	3%
Key Stage 4	69%	88%	15%	5%	9%	2%	8%	5%

The qualitative evidence provided by the respondents to this year's survey shows the range of approaches adopted by state schools in respect of offering students the opportunity to study a second language at either Key Stage 3 or 4:

*'At Key Stage 3 students who wish to can pick up another language in Year 9. In reality only about four per cent take up the offer. It is a desultory offer really because they only get one lesson of the additional language.'*

*'All do three languages – Years 7–9 – French, Spanish, Latin. Around one in three take two languages to Key Stage 4. Around one in ten take two languages at Key Stage 5.'*

Respondents' comments also show that the opportunity to study a second language is often only offered to, or taken up by, a minority of pupils:

*'Only around five per cent of a cohort of students each year take a second language. It is likely to die in the next couple of years (lack of support from SLT).'*

*'Very few do a second language at present due to teacher constraints.'*

*'Pupils who take early entry GCSE in Year 9 may take a second language to GCSE in Key Stage 4. No more than five pupils in a year group (240) have done this.'*

## 8.5 | Key points

- Chinese and Spanish are the only languages which show an increase in the number of pupils studying them or schools offering them.
- Chinese is more usually offered as an extra-curricular subject and for only a short amount of time each week.
- German continues to decline in both the state and independent sectors.
- An increasing number of schools report that they are offering Latin in addition to a modern language.
- Opportunities to learn more than one language are in decline in the state sector. It is far more common for the independent sector to offer pupils the opportunity to study two languages than it is in the state sector. More than 90 per cent of independent schools offer all pupils the opportunity to learn more than one language at Key Stage 3, whereas only 35 per cent of state schools do so.
- In the independent sector there are significant declines in the numbers of pupils learning French and German.
- Whereas some lesser-taught languages are being taught in an increasing number of schools as extra-curricular subjects, or offered as examination subjects to pupils who already speak them, there has been little progress in embedding them as mainstream curriculum options.

# 9

## Conclusions

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For the first time since 2004, the academic year 2014/15 sees the compulsory teaching of languages across two consecutive key stages in English schools. Against this background, this year's Language Trends survey has been able to gather rich quantitative and qualitative evidence of the impact that the introduction of languages at Key Stage 2 has had, as well as exploring further some of the major issues which have emerged in Language Trends surveys from previous years. These include transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3, the take-up of languages at Key Stage 4 and the state of languages at Key Stage 5. The research has sought both facts and views from teachers in both primary and secondary phases and both the state and independent school sectors.

It is clear that issues occurring at one particular key stage are rarely isolated and frequently have a knock-on effect on another key stage or across the whole school system. The overarching conclusions to this year's Languages Trends research centre around four major themes. Each of these is of considerable significance and merits serious consideration by stakeholders in education, policy, business and the media. We hope that the presentation of the key findings in this way will facilitate productive discussion and debate which will, in turn, benefit both young people in education across the country as well as those professionals whose working lives are dedicated to developing the knowledge and skills of children and young people.

### **1. Statutory status for languages at Key Stage 2 has had an immediate positive effect on language provision in primary schools.**

Following the introduction of compulsory language teaching for all pupils at Key Stage 2 at the beginning of the 2014/15 academic year, as many as 99 per cent of primary schools now report that they are teaching a language. This is a further increase on the 95 and 97 per cent recorded by the Language Trends research in 2013 and 2012 respectively and shows the immediate effect that legislation can have on schools.

Many schools acknowledge that their provision of language teaching at Key Stage 2 has been 'informal' and 'patchy' to date and qualitative evidence provided by respondents to this year's survey shows that schools are working hard to increase resources and improve systems to ensure that the language teaching offer to pupils improves in line with the requirements of the new national curriculum. However, many differences remain in key aspects such as the amount of curriculum time dedicated each week to the learning of a language, the level of linguistic competence of class teachers, who are still the majority source of language teaching for Key Stage 2 pupils, and the degree to which primary teachers are able to achieve a consistency of provision and achievement in pupil learning to meet the needs of Key Stage 3 teachers receiving pupils into Year 7. Primary teachers report that their biggest challenges are finding sufficient curriculum time for languages and boosting staff confidence and linguistic proficiency to teach reading, writing and grammatical understanding. Many would welcome guidance and support with these challenges but this year's survey provides little evidence of languages-specific CPD for primary teachers.

Against the backdrop of these challenges, as many as 44 per cent of primary schools report that they have no contact with local secondary schools on issues relating to transition from Key Stage 2 to 3. This is broadly similar to the percentage noted in the 2013/14 Languages Trends report when the survey focused in some detail on what was happening in secondary and primary schools to support effective Key Stage 2–3 transition and revealed the high degree of insularity in both

education phases. The introduction of compulsory languages at Key Stage 2 in September 2014 has, as yet, produced no evidence of increased collaboration around transition – rather the reverse – and it is probably still too early to expect major changes, particularly given the impediments cited by secondary schools. From the schools' perspective, the issue of transition is not yet high on the agenda, yet if the new national curriculum is to deliver the raised standards of linguistic competence envisaged in the new GCSE and A levels, the development of the quality and consistency of language teaching in Key Stage 2 needs to go hand in hand with efforts in secondary schools to capture the benefits and build on them, rather than assuming that all pupils will begin from a standing start in Year 7.

For their part, secondary schools acknowledge the desirability of collaboration but cite a number of impediments to the development of sustained collaboration with primary schools which are beyond their control. These include i) the large numbers of feeder primary schools which are often geographically dispersed; ii) lack of interest from primary schools who are unresponsive to approaches; and iii) budgetary constraints/capacity issues. Qualitative evidence from this year's survey indicates that secondary schools are now less able to provide support to primary colleagues than was the case in the past. A particular case in point is the impact of the cessation of the highly valued cross-phase collaboration which has resulted from the withdrawal of funding for specialist languages colleges which, from 1995 onwards, had been charged with promoting languages within their local communities.

While there are some good examples in the qualitative data from this year's survey of effective cross-phase working and imaginative opportunities to bring pupils from both key stages together, much remains to be done to facilitate teachers in both education phases in developing collaboration to a level at which pupils will begin to see real lasting benefits. Primary schools would clearly benefit from secondary teachers' subject expertise and secondary teachers would benefit from a better understanding of how language learning fits with primary pedagogy and the primary curriculum.

## **2. There is a growing tendency for schools to exclude some pupils from language learning at Key Stages 3 and 4, with access to language learning often being linked to social advantage.**

The increasing tendency to excuse, exclude or disapply pupils from languages tuition at various stages suggests that schools are starting to regard languages as expendable for some pupils. This is perhaps one of the most serious findings from the 2014/15 survey. In 2014/15 some pupils or groups of pupils at Key Stage 3 do not study a language in some eight per cent of schools in the state sector and the qualitative evidence provided by respondents to this year's survey shows that exclusion can affect as much as 30 per cent of the cohort. At Key Stage 4, some 28 per cent of state schools do not make the study of a language available to all pupils. In some cases the fact that a pupil was taken out of language classes at Key Stage 3 then prevents them from taking up a language at Key Stage 4, and in other cases selection of certain pathways automatically excludes the study of a language. There is also evidence of schools actively dissuading those pupils from studying a language who they deem unlikely to achieve a good pass at GCSE.

The practice of disapplication of pupils at Key Stage 3, and of restricting access to language study at Key Stage 4, is associated with socio-economic disadvantage and creating a widening gap in opportunities to learn to speak another language. In schools located in the most socio-economically deprived areas of the country, the proportion excluding groups of pupils from language study at Key Stage 3 rises to 17 per cent and those excluding pupils from language study at Key Stage 4 rises

to 44 per cent. In contrast, in the independent sector, languages are compulsory for all in the vast majority of schools throughout Key Stages 3 and 4, and there are far more opportunities for fee-paying pupils to learn a second modern or ancient language.

Whether schools practise the exclusion of individual pupils or groups of pupils at Key Stage 3, the reduction of time in the curriculum for languages or the reduction of Key Stage 3 to just two academic years, this has repercussions into Key Stage 4 and beyond. Pupils deprived early in their secondary education of the chance to progress with their language learning, or to raise their levels of attainment and their confidence as language learners are unlikely to be able to catch up later. They are also denied an opportunity to reinforce their literacy through learning another language as well as to develop their view of the world at a key point in their intellectual development. They are also excluded from the full range of subject choices at Key Stage 4 and for GCSE and beyond.

Financial pressures on schools are further reducing opportunities to study a language. The very small numbers of pupils opting to study languages at A level presents an additional challenge as a result of the pressure on schools to only run those A level courses which attract sufficient numbers (usually groups of at least eight to ten students) to make the course financially viable. This year's Language Trends report shows that teachers regard the take-up of languages post-16 as one of the most challenging issues they face and that A level language courses are under significant threat because of low numbers.

The issue of exclusion and uneven provision is closely connected to another key theme emerging from this year's Language Trends survey, namely the adverse effect of school performance measures and assessment systems.

### **3. External assessment systems and school performance measures are having a negative impact on the teaching of languages in secondary schools.**

With the increased pressure on schools to improve their performance and levels of achievement, as well as the intense scrutiny of pupil performance in English and mathematics, it is perhaps inevitable that school leaders seek to adopt measures which will not only help ensure the best performance outcomes from pupils entering public examinations but also demonstrate via performance tables that the school's standard of teaching and learning is high. However, this year's Language Trends survey shows how the drive for high pupil achievement data and the prioritisation of other subjects is having an adverse effect on the learning of languages in English schools.

It is the pressure to make more time available for those subjects which are prioritised in accountability measures such as mathematics and English which is behind the reduction in the number of hours in the timetable available for the study of a language at Key Stage 3. Language teachers in secondary schools see competition from other subjects as one of the major issues affecting their subject and this is closely linked to the way that languages are assessed and graded in relation to other subjects and the knock-on effects on pupil attainment and school performance.

This year's Language Trends research provides evidence via the survey and the case studies that schools with high levels of take-up for languages, where pupils of a range of abilities take the subject to GCSE, are unfairly represented as underperforming in government accountability measures since these are based on achievement rather than participation. As a result, school leaders are having to make difficult choices which, in many cases, are leading to cuts in language provision in order to improve schools' performance against national accountability measures. Language provision in

former specialist language colleges is particularly vulnerable to this effect. Decisions about whether languages should be compulsory for all or some pupils in Key Stage 4, or whether language study is even 'appropriate' for certain groups of pupils, are being taken not on educational grounds or with regard to the interests and potential of the pupils concerned, but on the need of schools to do well against accountability measures and in national performance tables. However, as one teacher points out, the value pupils derive from learning a language is not dependent on their academic ability. Language departments are being put under pressure by the use of data that the vast majority believe is flawed (see the Ipsos/MORI finding that only 18 per cent of language teachers believe that GCSE is a fair measure of linguistic competence) and does not compare like with like. Average grades are skewed not only by schools' increasing propensity to enter only high-achieving pupils for languages GCSEs, but by candidates who are 'native' or 'background' speakers. This system is working to the detriment of pupils' education and undermines the work of teachers dedicated to giving a broad spectrum of learners an opportunity to develop their language skills and an understanding of the world beyond the 'Anglosphere'.

The decline of alternative accreditation such as NVQs, Asset Languages and others, following the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition government's decision for these and other similar qualifications not to count towards schools' performance, has made it much more difficult for language departments to offer language courses suitable for lower-ability pupils.

It is not, however, only lower-ability pupils whose opportunities and choices are restricted by unsuitable forms of accreditation or lack of access to sufficient curriculum time. Respondents to this year's Language Trends survey also provide plenty of evidence that higher- and middle-ability students are being deterred from taking languages, both at GCSE as well as A level, because of the fact that languages are regarded as more difficult subjects and because of the uncertainty of getting the top grades needed for study at the next level. Language teaching in the independent sector is suffering particularly from this effect.

#### **4. Wider societal attitudes are adversely affecting an understanding of the value of languages and discouraging pupils from seeing languages as a serious subject for study.**

There is one further issue which is contributing to the difficult climate for languages in schools which plays a significant role in deterring students who are capable of becoming good linguists from studying a language. That is the widely held belief that languages are not important in comparison with mathematics and science subjects. The view that other subjects are more useful in careers, that everyone speaks English and that it is easier to achieve examination success in other school subjects is commonplace. In this year's Language Trends survey as many as two thirds of teachers from across both the independent and state sectors report finding it challenging to attract pupils to study a language post-16. A lack of awareness of the value of languages for study, work and leisure and a view that languages are both difficult and of lesser importance is attributed to school leaders, parents, employers, school-based pastoral staff and careers advisers, politicians and the media. Teachers report that isolationist positions reported in the media in relation to cooperation in Europe and beyond are affecting the attitudes of some groups of students as regards language learning. Clearer messages about the importance of languages by those with the power to influence the thinking of young people and to guide them towards making decisions which will maximise their future study and career opportunities would do much to protect and nurture the valuable place of languages alongside the many other subjects which are important for study.

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## Appendix: Response profiles

### State primary schools

	Base	Sample	Responses	Response Rate
Primary	13567	3000	648	21.6%

FSM Quintile	Base		Sample		Responses	
High FSM	2733	19.8%	596	19.9%	114	17.6%
High Med FSM	2743	19.9%	604	20.1%	137	21.1%
Med FSM	2741	19.8%	594	19.8%	127	19.6%
Low Med FSM	2725	19.7%	565	18.8%	139	21.5%
Low FSM	2806	20.3%	621	20.7%	129	19.9%
NA	68	0.5%	20	0.7%	2	0.3%

Region	Base		Sample		Responses	
East Midlands	1265	9.2%	271	9.0%	77	11.9%
East of England	1500	10.9%	324	10.8%	59	9.1%
London	1665	12.1%	392	13.1%	70	10.8%
North East	721	5.2%	147	4.9%	41	6.3%
North West	2184	15.8%	472	15.7%	111	17.1%
South East	2032	14.7%	435	14.5%	80	12.3%
South West	1455	10.5%	325	10.8%	58	9.0%
West Midlands	1486	10.8%	312	10.4%	60	9.3%
Yorkshire and the Humber	1508	10.9%	322	10.7%	92	14.2%

Performance Quintile	Base		Sample		Responses	
A – high	2621	19.0%	587	19.6%	123	19.0%
B	2747	19.9%	590	19.7%	137	21.1%
C	2711	19.6%	598	19.9%	142	21.9%
D	2571	18.6%	523	17.4%	106	16.4%
E – low	2917	21.1%	643	21.4%	133	20.5%
NA	249	1.8%	59	2.0%	7	1.1%

School Type	Sample		Responses	
Academy (Converter)	258	8.6%	53	8.2%
Academy (Sponsor-led)	162	5.4%	31	4.8%
Community School	1431	47.7%	317	48.9%
Foundation School	127	4.2%	40	6.2%
Free School	21	0.7%	1	0.2%
Voluntary Aided School	644	21.5%	136	21.0%
Voluntary Controlled School	357	11.9%	70	10.8%

EAL Quintile	Base		Sample		Responses	
High EAL	2749	19.9%	601	20.0%	129	19.9%
High Med EAL	2734	19.8%	622	20.7%	132	20.4%
Med EAL	2742	19.8%	591	19.7%	130	20.1%
Low Med EAL	1975	14.3%	418	13.9%	87	13.4%
Low EAL	3548	25.7%	748	24.9%	168	25.9%
NA	68	0.5%	20	0.7%	2	0.3%

### State secondary schools

	Base	Sample	Responses	Response Rate
State secondary	3119	2000	529	26.5%

FSM Quintile	Base		Sample		Responses	
High FSM	607	19.5%	406	20.3%	82	15.5%
High Med FSM	611	19.6%	388	19.4%	99	18.7%
Med FSM	612	19.6%	384	19.2%	109	20.6%
Low Med FSM	601	19.3%	372	18.6%	86	16.3%
Low FSM	624	20.0%	408	20.4%	145	27.4%
NA	64	2.1%	40	2.0%	8	1.5%

Region	Base		Sample		Responses	
East Midlands	255	8.2%	163	8.2%	50	9.5%
East of England	345	11.1%	208	10.4%	57	10.8%
London	449	14.4%	298	14.9%	72	13.6%
North East	149	4.8%	100	5.0%	28	5.3%
North West	448	14.4%	315	15.8%	80	15.1%
South East	482	15.5%	286	14.3%	84	15.9%
South West	310	9.9%	185	9.3%	54	10.2%
West Midlands	377	12.1%	242	12.1%	53	10.0%
Yorkshire and the Humber	304	9.7%	203	10.2%	51	9.6%

Performance Quintile	Base		Sample		Responses	
A – high	600	19.2%	394	19.7%	125	23.6%
B	599	19.2%	392	19.6%	109	20.6%
C	598	19.2%	373	18.7%	86	16.3%
D	601	19.3%	378	18.9%	100	18.9%
E – low	600	19.2%	388	19.4%	95	18.0%
NA	121	3.9%	75	3.8%	14	2.6%

School Type	Sample		Responses	
Academy (Converter)	792	39.6%	240	45.4%
Academy (Sponsor-led)	338	16.9%	72	13.6%
City Technology College	3	0.2%	1	0.2%
Community School	401	20.1%	104	19.7%
Foundation School	183	9.2%	42	7.9%
Free School	44	2.2%	10	1.9%
Studio School	13	0.7%	1	0.2%
University Technical College	9	0.5%	1	0.2%
Voluntary Aided School	188	9.4%	55	10.4%
Voluntary Controlled School	29	1.5%	3	0.6%

EAL Quintile	Base		Sample		Responses	
High EAL	608	19.5%	396	19.8%	101	19.1%
High Med EAL	610	19.6%	384	19.2%	109	20.6%
Med EAL	602	19.3%	379	19.0%	85	16.1%
Low Med EAL	616	19.7%	394	19.7%	102	19.3%
Low EAL	619	19.8%	407	20.4%	124	23.4%
NA	64	2.1%	40	2.0%	8	1.5%

### Independent secondary schools

	Base	Sample	Responses	Response Rate
Independent schools	679	500	128	25.6%

Region	Base		Sample		Responses	
East Midlands	43	6.3%	26	5.2%	4	3.1%
East of England	76	11.2%	54	10.8%	15	11.7%
London	117	17.2%	88	17.6%	21	16.4%
North East	17	2.5%	12	2.4%	5	3.9%
North West	67	9.9%	53	10.6%	14	10.9%
South East	162	23.9%	120	24.0%	34	26.6%
South West	81	11.9%	60	12.0%	14	10.9%
West Midlands	67	9.9%	51	10.2%	12	9.4%
Yorkshire and the Humber	49	7.2%	36	7.2%	9	7.0%

Performance Quintile	Base		Sample		Responses	
A – high	136	20.0%	90	18.0%	26	20.3%
B	136	20.0%	105	21.0%	34	26.6%
C	135	19.9%	94	18.8%	27	21.1%
D	136	20.0%	99	19.8%	22	17.2%
E – low	136	20.0%	112	22.4%	19	14.8%



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