



Language Trends England 2025

Language teaching in primary, secondary and independent
schools in England

Survey report by Ian Collen and Jayne Duff

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Introduction

British Council is pleased to present the results of *Language Trends England 2025*. British Council supports peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide through work in arts and culture, education and the English language.

British Council is committed to fostering global connections through collaboration and shared opportunities. In the education sector, British Council encourages students to explore other cultures and languages by offering teaching resources to bring the world into the classroom and creating opportunities for international school partnerships.

Language Trends is an annual survey of primary and secondary schools in England. Since the first report in 2002, the survey has become an authoritative overview of the language learning landscape at school level. Language Trends is designed to gather information about the current situation for language teaching and learning. The report reflects on the impact of policy measures in relation to language learning, and the strengths and weaknesses based both on quantitative data and qualitative comments expressed by responding teachers.

There are now surveys and Language Trends reports for all four devolved nations of the United Kingdom (UK): in Wales since 2015, a biennial survey in Northern Ireland since 2019, and most recently Scotland since 2024/25. This series and suite of reports shows longitudinal trends and general shifts in data, providing a snapshot of the current language education situation for teachers, school leaders, academics, inspectors, policy makers, school pupils and the public to consider aspects of language learning more deeply.¹

British Council commissioned Queen's University Belfast to conduct the 2025 round of the

Language Trends Survey for England. On behalf of British Council and Queen's University Belfast, we would like to thank teachers for participating in our research. Without teachers' participation, our research would not be possible.

Headline findings 2025

The headline findings for 2025 are:

- At Key Stage 2, French continues to be the most widely taught primary language, taught in 70 per cent of responding schools. This is followed by Spanish, taught in over a quarter of responding schools in Key Stage 2;
- Forty-nine per cent of state primary schools surveyed have contact with a local state secondary school in relation to language learning;
- Approximately one fifth of state secondary schools surveyed feel that Year 7 pupils are now less prepared than pupils three years ago following their language learning experience at Key Stage 2;
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) for language teaching has not yet been widely adopted by primary and secondary teachers;
- French continues to be the most offered language at Key Stage 3, while Spanish retains more pupils at the age 14 and age 16 transition points;
- International opportunities have bounced back since the Covid-19 pandemic with 74 per cent of state secondary schools offering trips abroad, though 49 per cent of teachers have never heard of Turing funding;
- On average, responding secondary school teachers estimate 53 per cent of their Year 11 pupils are currently learning a language for GCSE;
- Recruitment challenges in over 60 per cent of all state secondary schools and over half of independent schools surveyed;
- Ample opportunities for pupils and/teachers to gain international engagement in the independent sector (opportunities reported by 60 out of 63 independent schools surveyed), with growing opportunities in the state sector.

¹ The research series can be accessed via the following link: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-insight/research-series/language-trends>.

Policy context and background

Following 14 years of Conservative power, the 2024/25 school year in England began under a new Labour government, which quickly announced a review of the National Curriculum and associated assessment; the final report is due to be published in autumn 2025.

The current National Curriculum must be taught in all local authority-maintained schools in England and the National Curriculum Framework stipulates that languages education is compulsory for all pupils aged 7 to 14:

Key Stage	Year Groups	Age of pupils	National Curriculum Requirement to Study a Language
1	1–2	5–7	None
2	3–6	7–11	Study an ancient language or a Modern Foreign Language
3	7–9	11–14	Study a Modern Foreign Language
4	10–11	14–16	None (but encouraged as part of EBacc, see below)

Table 1: National Curriculum England Requirements to Study a Language

In England, 81.9 per cent of state secondary schools are academies or free schools, which are currently not obligated to follow the National Curriculum, although in practice many do.

The English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is an accountability measure for schools in England and was introduced in 2010. The EBacc encourages all pupils to study a GCSE in English language, English literature, mathematics, the sciences, a language (ancient or modern) and geography or history.² The previous government's ambition was for 90 per cent of pupils to study an EBacc subject combination at GCSE level by 2025.

In the 2023/24 school year, 40.4 per cent of pupils were entered into the full EBacc. However, of the pupils who entered four out of the five EBacc components, 89 per cent did not study a language in 2023/24.³ In the interim report of the government's Curriculum and Assessment Review (DfE, 2025), it is noted that EBacc performance measures may unnecessarily constrain the choice of pupils and limit their access to, and the time available for, vocational and arts subjects.

Reforms to French, German and Spanish GCSEs came into effect for first teaching in September 2024, for awarding in Summer 2026, with the aim of increasing the accessibility of language study (Department for Education, 2022). The linguistic content of revised GCSEs in French, German and Spanish focuses on the most commonly occurring vocabulary of each language, with 1,700 words at Higher Tier and 1,200 words at Foundation Tier. Pupils are expected to know and use the specified linguistic content receptively and productively in

the spoken and written modalities. Any words on examination papers outside of the prescribed list are glossed and explained. There are currently no plans to adopt this approach in languages or levels other than GCSE French, German and Spanish in England, nor are there plans to align GCSEs in French, German and Spanish from Awarding Organisations in Northern Ireland and Wales.

England is a linguistic melting pot with more than 200 languages spoken in primary schools. According to the 2021 census, at country-level, the five most spoken languages after English are Polish, Romanian, Panjabi, Urdu and Portuguese. The school system remains largely wedded to the teaching of French, German or Spanish as the main Modern Foreign Language (MFL), but these can be in competition at examination level with Home, Heritage and Community Languages (HHCL). For example, approaches to considering HHCL qualifications in university admissions vary widely, in ways that French, German and Spanish for 'native' English speakers do not. In addition to evidence of indifference towards HHCL qualifications, some examples perpetuate a language hierarchy, thereby creating the possibility for inequities to be built into admissions procedures (Humphries et al., 2024). Improved levels of qualifications in HHCLs have significant potential to bring individual, societal, cultural and economic benefits for England.

One recent initiative to support HHCL has been the National Consortium for Languages Education (NCLE), based at University College London, signposting to supporting materials and good

² GCSE: General Certificate of Secondary Education, the main qualification taken by pupils in England, Northern Ireland and Wales at age 16.

³ See <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/key-stage-4-performance>.

practice, and working with supplementary schools. NCLE aims to support high quality language education and to increase uptake of languages qualifications in Key Stage 4 and 5 in English state-funded schools. The consortium recognises and follows the recommendations and principles enshrined in Sir Ian Bauckham's 2016 Modern Foreign Languages Pedagogy Review. In 2023, NCLE created a network of 19 lead hub schools across England. Each lead hub school delivered training to up to seven partner schools to improve standards of language teaching and learning. The programme focuses on French, German and Spanish as they make up over 90 percent of GCSE entries, with particular emphasis on German to reverse the decline in recent GCSE and A-level entries in this strategically important language. NCLE is delivered by the Institute of Education, University College London's Faculty of Education and Society on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE) and in partnership with British Council and Goethe-Institut.

Oak National Academy is an independent public body, working in partnership to improve pupil outcomes and close the disadvantage gap by supporting teachers to teach, and enabling pupils to access, a high-quality curriculum. Teachers can use Oak's quality-checked resources for free and resources for primary and secondary MFL are being developed.

The Mandarin Excellence Programme (MEP), delivered by the IOE in partnership with British Council, is now in its ninth year and continues to support and promote the uptake of Mandarin. The initiative was first funded by the DfE in 2016, and it is anticipated that over 13,000 pupils enrolled in the programme will be 'on track towards fluency' in 2025 (IOE, 2025).

The Latin Excellence Programme, a £4 million programme delivered by Future Academies, was closed in February 2025 following two and a half successful years in increasing the uptake of Latin in forty non-selective state schools (Latin Excellence, 2025). The funding was cut mid-year by DfE, affecting over 4,500 pupils.⁴

It is against this backdrop that we embarked on data collection for this latest iteration of *Language Trends England*.

Research outline

Queen's University Belfast was commissioned by British Council to conduct research for *Language Trends England 2025*. Ethical approval was secured from the Research Ethics Committee at the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work (SSES), Queen's University Belfast. All participants gave their voluntary and informed consent to take part, and the project was conducted to the highest ethical standards.

The aim of the research is to investigate the current situation for language teaching and learning in state primary, state secondary and independent secondary schools in England in the 2024/25 school year. As with previous iterations, the methodology undertaken involved using questionnaires to survey schools. Three surveys (primary, secondary and independent) were developed in late 2024 in consultation with an Advisory Panel of in-service schoolteachers, the Association for Language Learning (ALL), the Independent Schools' Modern Languages Association (ISMLA), school leadership associations, the Department for Education, NCLE, and representatives of Higher Education.

4 See <https://latinexcellence.org/latestnews/year-2-evaluation> for further information on the success of the scheme.

The surveys (using questionnaires and hosted on Questback) were conducted from early January until March 2025. Using a database of publicly available email addresses signposted for the Head of Foreign Languages or Headteacher, schools were invited to participate via email. The survey links were also distributed via British Council social media channels. Response rates have declined in 2025, with a total of 1,011 schools participating after data sets were cleaned and duplicates removed (compared to 1,324 schools in 2024). Table 2 shows the overall response rates by sector, using the base as the number of schools to which we know our invitation email arrived and rounded to the nearest percentage. Given that the survey links were also made available on social media, it is difficult to calculate an exact response rate.

	Base (emails delivered)	LTE24 Responses	LTE25 Responses	Response rate % for LTE25
State Primary	6068	603	503	8%
State Secondary	2645	601	445	17%
Independent secondary	532	120	63	12%

Table 2: Survey response rates

Univariate and some multivariate analyses were performed on the quantitative data to identify overall trends; qualitative comments were analysed by means of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) using deductive coding.

Findings from primary schools

Profile of responding primary schools

The *Language Trends 2025* survey arrived by email to 6,068 primary school inboxes on our email distribution list. In total, 503 state primary schools responded to the survey, resulting in a response rate of eight per cent. Over a quarter of respondents are located in South East England (see Figure 1).

Location of responding primary schools

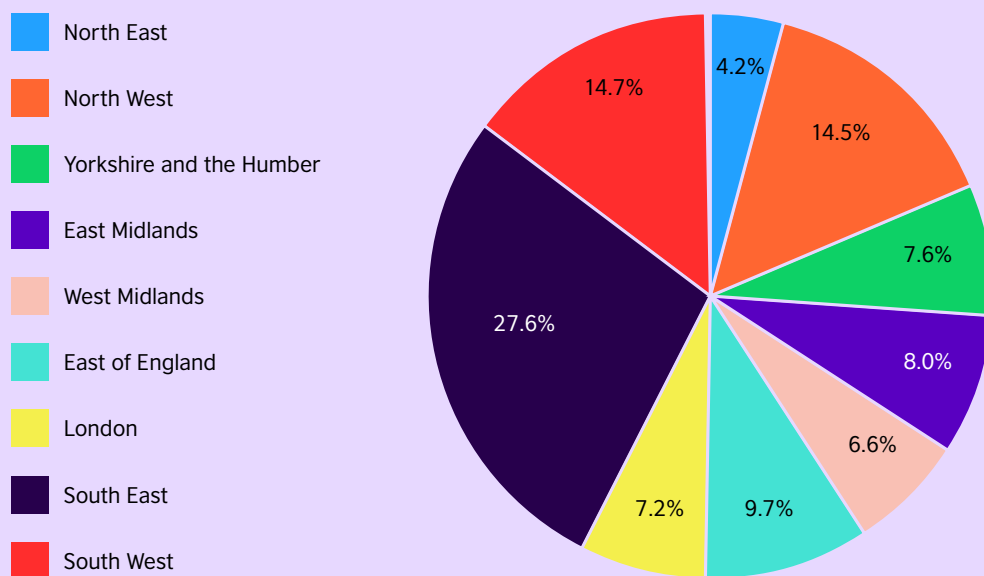


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Figure 1: Location of responding primary schools

The socio-economic profile of a school is indicated by the number of pupils entitled to Free School Meals (FSM). In England, the UK government funds free meals for children aged 4 to 16 if they live in a household that receives income-related benefits (such as universal credit) and has an annual income of less than £7,400 after tax or benefits. The current Free School Meal Entitlement (FSME) average for state primary schools in the 2023/24 school year is 24.3 per cent, similar to the national average of 24.6 per cent.

The research team calculated the FSME quintiles, from least to most deprived, using publicly available data from the 2023/24 school census, published in June 2024.⁵ Participants in quintiles 4 and 5 have the highest percentage of pupils with FSME, while quintiles 1 and 2 have the lowest

percentages of pupils with FSME (see Table 3). A truly representative sample of primary schools in England should have 20 per cent of respondents in each quintile. However, as Table 3 shows, over 50 per cent of responses are from schools in quintiles 1 and 2, with a quarter of responses from schools in quintiles 4 and 5; this suggests that, overall, the survey received more responses from schools in more affluent areas. Due to this socio-economic imbalance, the subsequent data may portray a more positive picture than the reality in many schools, and the findings must be interpreted with this in mind.

⁵ Available via the following link: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics/2023-24#dataBlock-892e8acf-47ca-4abc-b337-38a0bbcf9e6c-tables>.

Quintile	Range	% of respondents
1 – most affluent	0.0–10.2%	27%
2	10.3–16.5%	25%
3	16.6–24.9%	23%
4	25.0–37.4%	14%
5 – most deprived	37.5% and above	11%

Table 3: FSM quintiles for state primary schools in England and percentage of respondents within each quintile

The primary school survey was completed by the languages co-ordinator (44.9 per cent), the Headteacher (38 per cent), a senior leader (11.1 per cent), or another member of school staff (6 per cent). All but one responding school have taught languages in the 2024/25 school year as part of the curriculum; in the one responding school with no current language provision, they have taught primary languages over the past five years.

Curricular languages taught in primary schools

In the 502 schools that currently teach curricular primary languages, 82.5 per cent have taught languages for more than five years, and less than one per cent started teaching languages in the 2024/25 school year (consistent with the 2024 findings).

Language teaching is mainly provided by a classroom teacher (63.6 per cent), followed by a specialist language teacher based in the

school (33.6 per cent); a small number of schools noted the use of a peripatetic specialist teacher, language teachers from a local secondary school, or a Modern Language Assistant to deliver language teaching.

Primary school respondents were asked what languages they teach as part of the school day (see Figure 2). Very few schools reported primary language provision in early years and Key Stage 1. At Key Stage 2, French continues to be the most widely taught primary language, taught in 70 per cent of responding schools. This is followed by Spanish, taught in over a quarter of responding schools in Key Stage 2; there is a small, reported number of schools delivering curricular lessons on Ancient Greek, Arabic, German, Italian, Japanese, Latin, and Mandarin. Of those schools teaching Latin (1.2 to 1.4 per cent), five schools reported that all children have access to the subject, and in other schools it is offered in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Languages taught in primary schools in 2024/25 school year

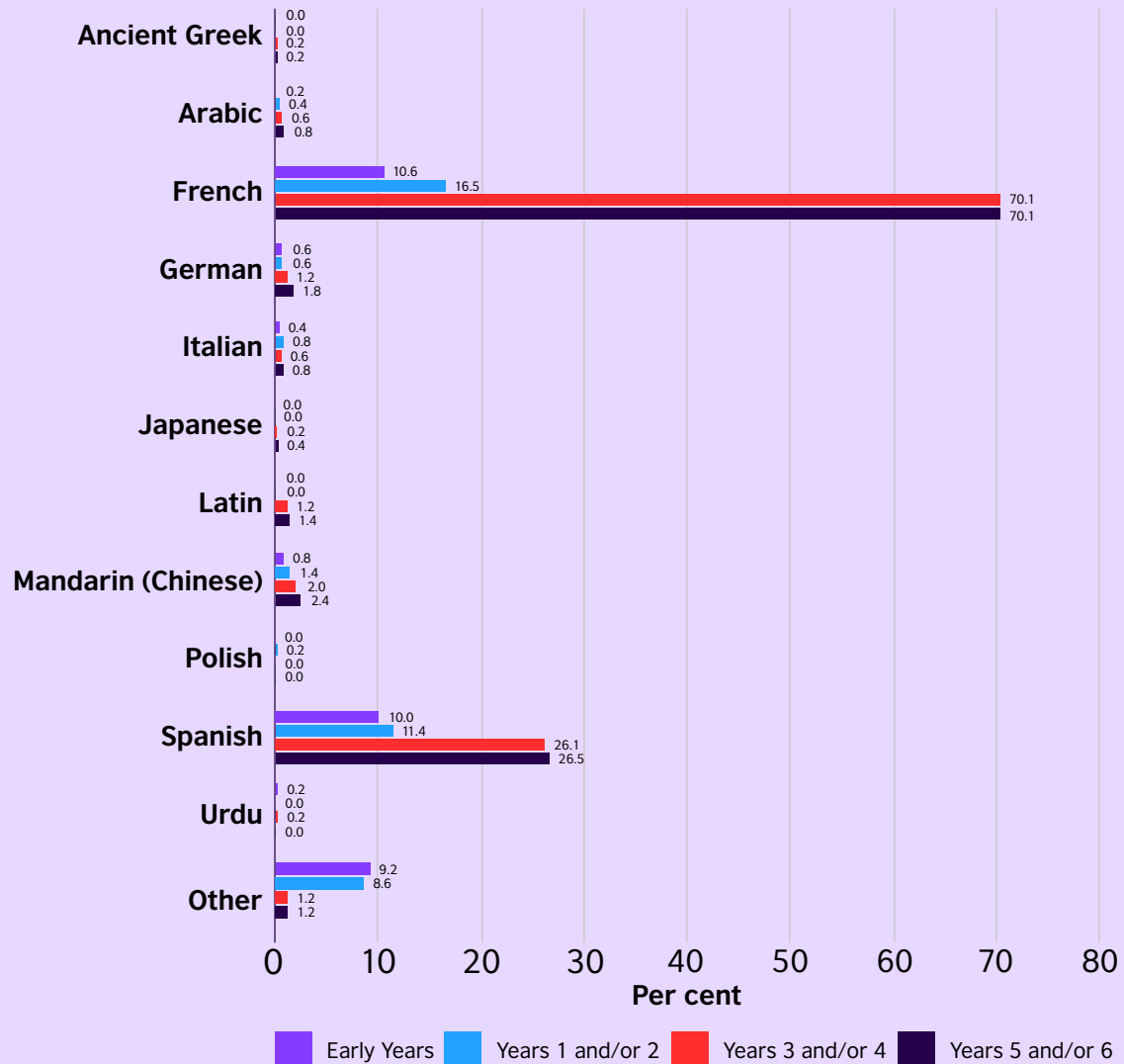


Figure 2: Languages taught in responding primary schools in 2024/25 school year

Responding schools were asked to comment on the impact, if any, on allocated languages time because of pupils spending extra time on literacy and numeracy. Just under one fifth (18.9 per cent) of respondents reported an impact on dedicated languages time, and commented the following:

“Yes, often MFL is not taught as core subjects take priority.”

“MFL is one subject that does tend to be squeezed out of a very busy primary curriculum. With the government focus on reading, writing and Maths results, this puts pressure on schools and teachers.”

“The curriculum as a whole is very full and MFL gets squeezed into smaller and smaller slots.”

Approaches to teaching primary languages

The survey asked schools if they complement teaching of a single language with a programme that encourages broader multilingual awareness; almost half (47.8 per cent) of respondents noted the ways in which they encourage broader multilingual awareness, with comments including the following:

“Celebrating the linguistic diversity of the school community. Recognising and celebrating the languages spoken by students and families within the school helps create a more inclusive environment. Initiatives such as multilingual signage and opportunities for students to teach their peers words from their home languages promote pride in linguistic diversity and build peer-to-peer learning.”

“This is a developing area. At present we have been focusing on building awareness that it is not only in Spain that Spanish is spoken and exploring different countries around the world that have Spanish as their official language, giving children a broad context for their language learning and promoting their interest in visiting other countries, when they are older, and putting their language learning skills to practical use.”

Primary language learning resources

Responding primary schools were asked about the resources that they use to deliver primary languages. Similar to the 2024 findings, most schools (82 per cent) use commercially produced resources, and 41 per cent use resources produced in their school. In ‘other’ comments, respondents noted using the Rachel Hawkes’ scheme of work, Primary Languages Network, Language Angels, Twinkl, Languagenut, resources from a university, and their own resources that they have created.

Type of resource	2024	2025
Commercially produced resources	79%	82%
Drawing on the resources of multilingual pupils and parents	4%	7%
Resources provided by cultural institutes	11%	10%
Resources produced in school	40%	41%
Resources produced by other schools	9%	10%
Resources provided by the British Council	6%	6%
Resources from Oak National Academy	3%	4%
Resources produced/provided by a charity	N/A	1%
Other	13%	14%

Table 4: Resources used in primary schools for language teaching

Approximately 12 per cent of all primary school respondents received funding in the 2024/25 school year for the development of primary language resources; in comments made by those who received funding, the highest noted budget allocation was £500. Other comments noted funding for Continuing Professional Development (CPD), subscriptions (such as ALL, Languagenut, Language Angels), and funding for teaching materials.

When asked what sort of resources would be helpful in an ideal world, the word ‘specialist’ was mentioned by respondents 62 times, ‘books’ 32 times, ‘funding’ 31 times and ‘training’ 19 times. Comments made by respondents also suggested pronunciation resources, including:

“Easy to access PowerPoints with embedded pronunciation and progression of skills planning included for our non-specialist teachers.”

“Resources with correct pronunciation to support staff and pupils.”

Almost 30 per cent of respondents use Apps to help their pupils with language learning. The most commonly used apps included: Duolingo, Language Angels, Primary Languages Network apps, Languagenut; several schools also noted the use of Google Translate.

Regarding Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology such as ChatGPT, Diffet, etc., primary schools surveyed were asked how often they make use of AI in language teaching. Three quarters of respondents never use it, and just under a quarter of respondents use it occasionally in a few lessons per month.

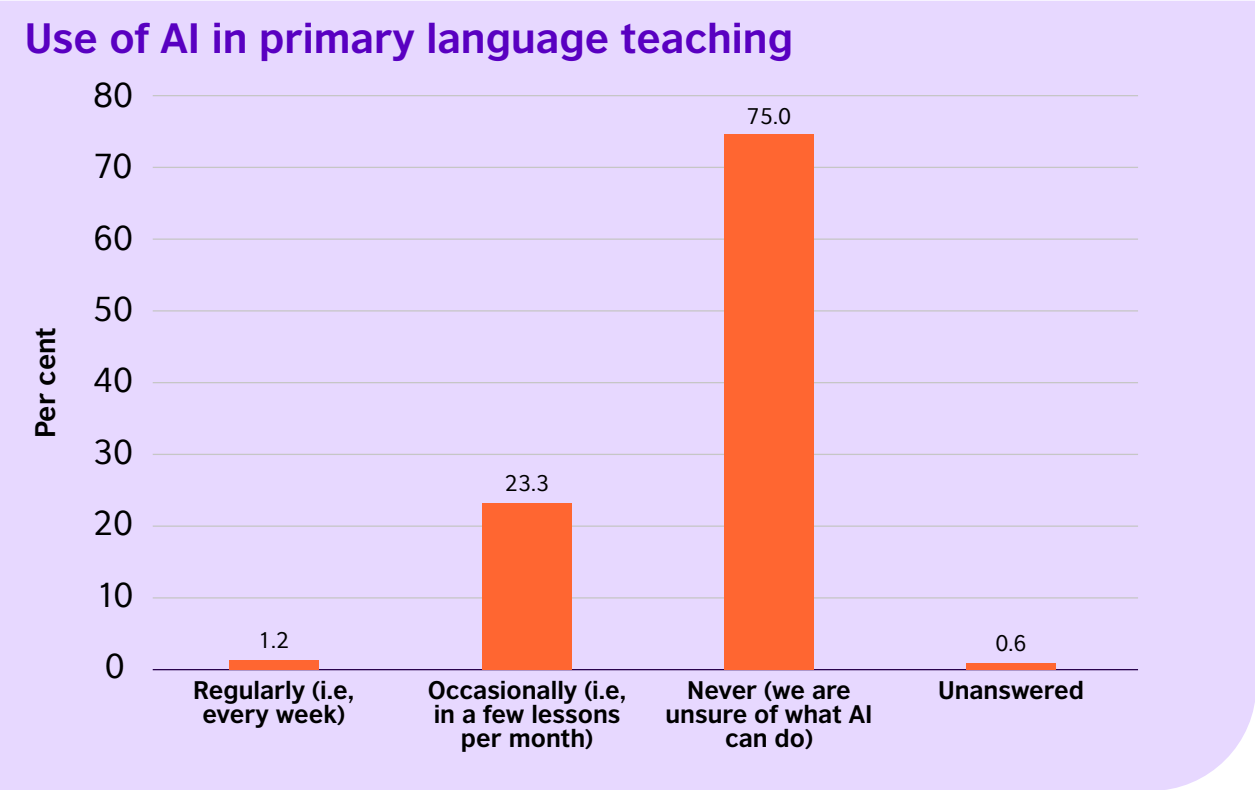


Figure 3: Frequency in the use of AI technology in primary language teaching

Home, Heritage and Community (HHCL) languages in primary schools

In England, the Department for Education reported that 20.8 per cent of all pupils in state schools have a first language known or believed to be other than English (DfE, 2024). In state primary schools, this figure is 22.8 per cent (compared to 22 per cent in 2023). There is thus clear evidence that the number of pupils with HHCL is increasing.

All 503 schools surveyed were asked if they have learners for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL); 90.7 per cent reported this to be the case, 8.7 per cent said no and less than one per cent were unsure, findings that are largely consistent with *Language Trends 2024*.

Using the publicly available census about EAL learners, the research team calculated the average percentage of EAL pupils in FSME quintiles (see Table 5). On average, 14.2 per cent of pupils in responding schools have English as an additional language; however, as shown in Table 5, there are higher percentages of EAL pupils in quintiles 4 (22.7 per cent) and 5 (26.4 per cent).

Quintile	Average % of EAL pupils
1 – most affluent	8.9%
2	11.9%
3	12.2%
4	22.7%
5 – most deprived	26.4%

Table 5: Average percentage of EAL primary pupils in FSME quintiles

Over 80 per cent of responding schools provided comments on how, if at all, they integrate pupils' home languages into the curriculum. One respondent noted that they would be keen to enhance their school's support of home languages:

"This is something we need to work on. We do have special events and days around family languages, cultures and religions but it is not fully integrated."

Other respondents noted the positive ways in which home languages are incorporated into daily school life:

"Depends on the fluency but we answer the register in different languages, ask children to talk about their languages/cultures in foundation subjects and use strategies to help children with EAL to access the whole curriculum."

"Within lessons, we regularly compare language structures, look for similarities and differences, share cultural and religious traditions as we are lucky to have a wide variety of nationalities and ethnicities in our school."

International engagement

Language Trends has been mapping international engagement in state primary schools over the past few years. Prior to both the Covid-19 pandemic and the UK's decision to leave the EU, international engagement at primary level was reasonably healthy. While engagement has not returned to pre-Covid figures, it is positive to note that five per cent less of schools are reporting no engagement, and there is a small percentage increase in schools reporting links with partner schools abroad and involvement in international projects (see Table 6). However, it is important to consider the fluctuations in response rates and statistical significance is not assured.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
The school has one or more partner schools abroad	35%	27%	19%	18%	19%	20%	15%	17%
Online / digital links with schools outside the UK	–	–	–	–	–	14%	11%	13%
British Council events/resources	–	–	–	–	–	–	7%	8%
Involvement in international projects	22%	16%	10%	8%	10%	10%	7%	10%
Host a language assistant	5%	5%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%	4%
None	46%	51%	61%	64%	67%	62%	66%	61%

Table 6: Longitudinal data relating to international engagement in state primary schools

Primary schools surveyed were asked if they have links with any outside organisations to promote language learning (Figure 4). More than half of responding schools reported no such links, while 11.9 per cent have links with local secondary schools, 10.7 per cent with ALL, 9.7 per cent with schools abroad and 8.7 per cent with British Council. Around 7 per cent of schools surveyed reported links with cultural institutes, including: Institut français, Goethe-Institut, Consejería de Educación, Confucius Institute and Qatar Foundation International.

Links with outside organisations to promote languages

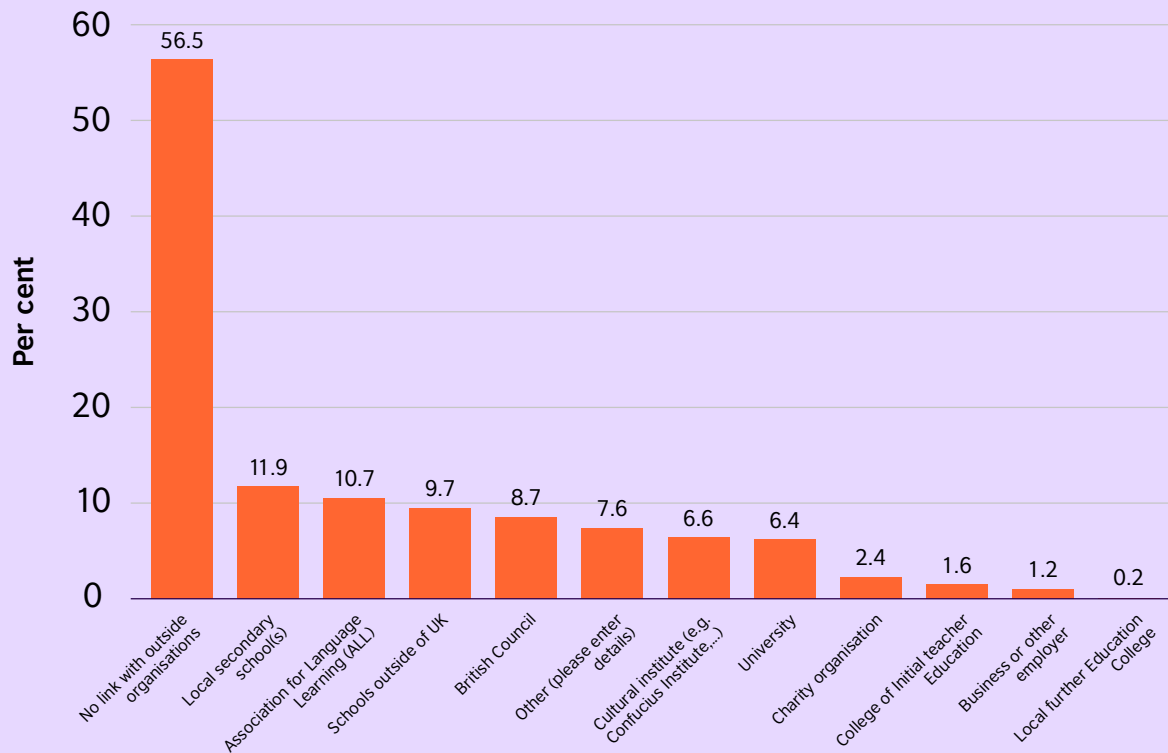


Figure 4: Percentage of responding schools with links to outside organisations to promote language learning (multiple answers permitted)

Barriers and additional support for primary language learning

Primary schools surveyed were asked to comment on the most significant barriers that they face in delivering high quality language lessons. The issue of time constraints was mentioned nearly two hundred times by respondents, followed by teacher knowledge of languages (mentioned approximately one hundred times); this reiterates the findings of Language Trends from 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 and highlights two key areas that are consistently reported as impeding language teaching and learning, with educators commenting the following:

“Time constraints to fit in everything else into the primary curriculum. Sadly, languages come down on the list of priorities.”

“Teacher knowledge and fitting it into the timetable.”

“Teaching staff confidence and subject knowledge. Also time for planning and time allocated in the curriculum.”

Staff confidence to deliver languages is another barrier, mentioned nearly 70 times amongst respondent answers. Several comments also noted the need for specialist teachers, funding, resources and expertise:

“Finance to pay for online resources as we no longer have a specialist teacher.”

“Good quality resources – especially to work on listening skills.”

“Finding specialist teachers to teach our pupils.”

“Teacher subject knowledge and lack of funding to pay for specialist teachers.”

The *Language Trends* survey asked if respondents would welcome a language-specific list of minimum vocabulary and grammar to be covered in Key Stage 2 (see Figure 5). Just less than 80 per cent of schools said yes (compared to 80 per cent in 2024), and 9.5 per cent said no (compared to 9 per cent in 2024).

Would your school welcome a language-specific list of minimum vocabulary and grammar to be covered in Key Stage 2?

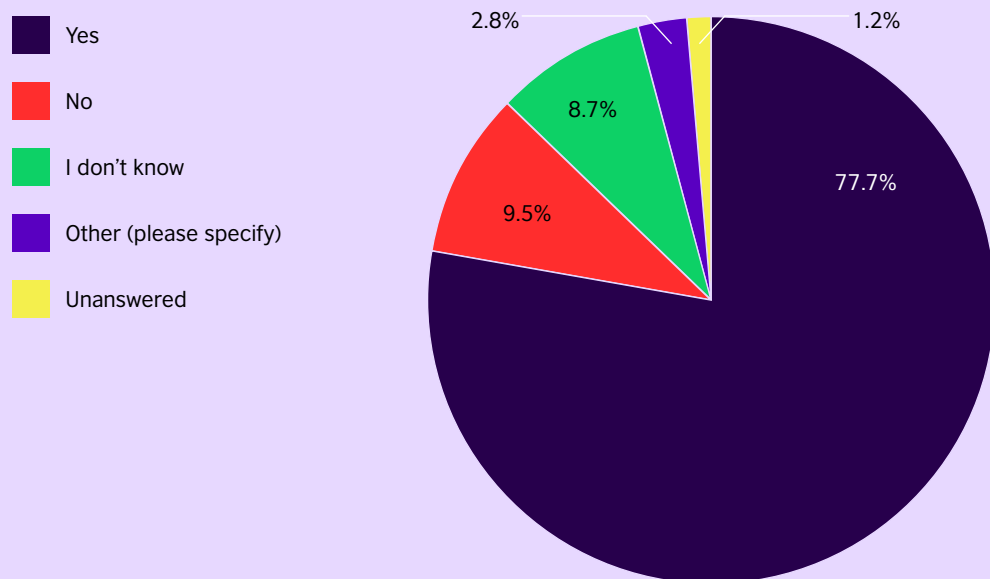


Figure 5: Percentage of responding primary schools who would welcome a language-specific list of vocabulary and grammar to be covered in Key Stage 2

Transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3

Language learning is compulsory for pupils aged 7–14 in England; at the point of transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3, pupils beginning their secondary phase of education continue language learning, though not necessarily with the same language(s) that they learnt in primary school.

In the primary survey, respondents were asked how they plan their curriculum for primary languages. Of the 502 schools surveyed who teach curricular languages in the 2024/25 school year, 76.9 per cent follow the DfE Key Stage 2 Programme of Study when planning their languages curriculum. A small number of responding schools (4.6 per cent) follow both the Key Stage 2 and 3 Programmes of Study, largely consistent with the last two iterations of Language Trends.

Contact between primary and secondary schools

All primary schools surveyed in 2025 were asked if they had any contacts with local secondary schools in relation to language learning. Just over 30 per cent of schools surveyed have contact with

one local secondary school, and just over half of schools reported no contacts with any secondary schools (Table 7).

Contact with a secondary school?	2025 (n=503)
Yes, with just one secondary school	31%
Yes, with some secondary schools	13.7%
Yes, with all the main receiving secondary schools	3.8%
No contacts with secondary schools	50.9%
Unanswered	0.6%

Table 7: Primary school respondent answers to ‘Do you have contacts with your local secondary schools in relation to language learning?’

In 2025, an increased percentage of primary schools surveyed reported contact with a local secondary school (Figure 6); however, given the low response rate in 2025, statistical significance cannot be assured.

% of primary schools in contact with a local secondary school

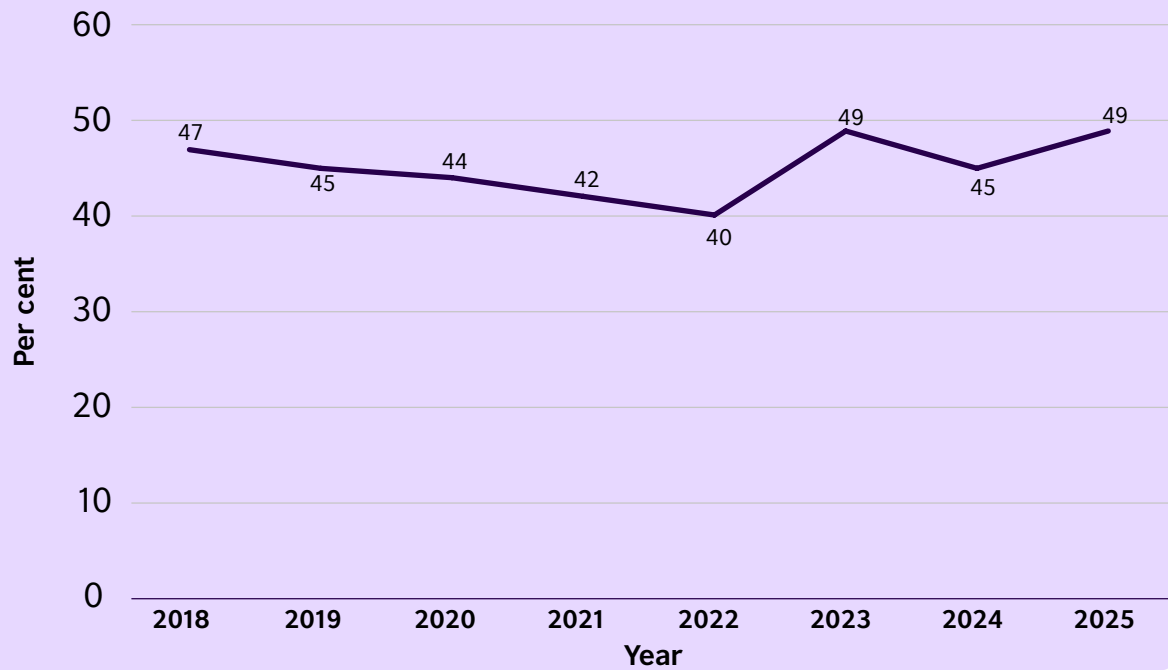


Figure 6: Percentage of state primary schools in contact with a local state secondary school in relation to language learning, 2018–2025

Of those primary schools in contact with a local secondary school, 50.8 per cent reported that they exchange information on language teaching informally (compared to 54 per cent in 2024, 53 per cent in 2023), and less than a third (31.1 per cent) take part in network/cluster meetings (consistent with 31 per cent in 2024, 30 per cent in 2023). At the point of transition between Key Stage 2 and 3, just over a quarter (27.5 per cent) of primary schools with secondary contacts provide information on pupil progress in language learning (see Figure 7).

Type of contact primary schools have with secondary schools

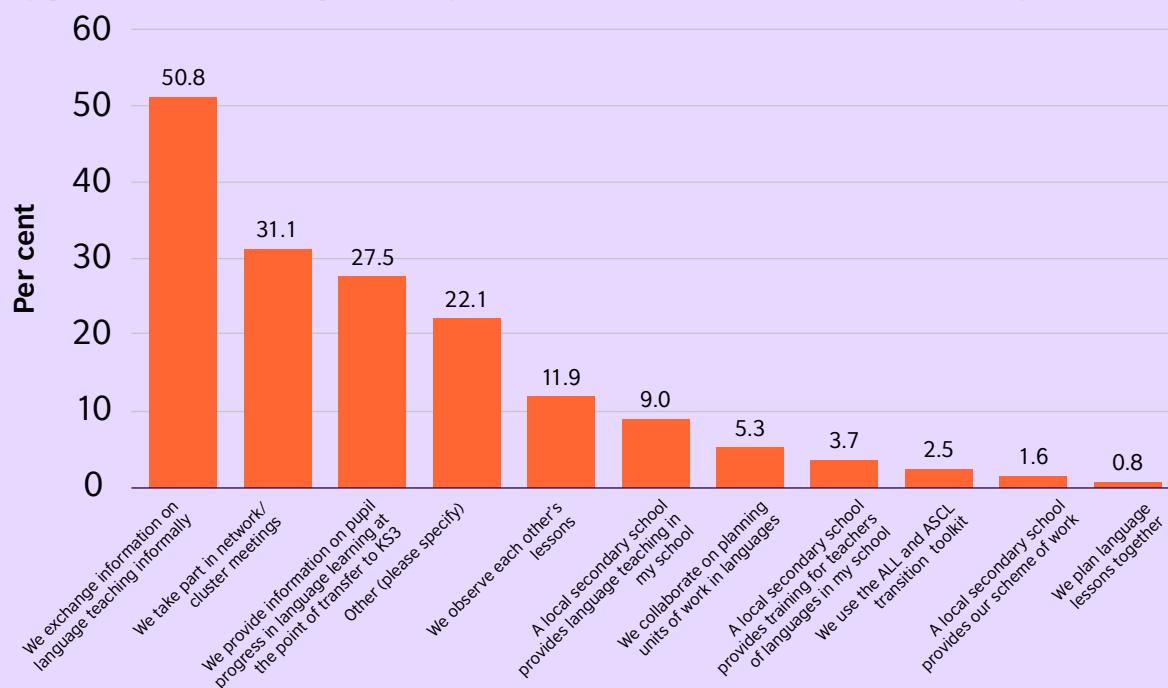


Figure 7: The type of contact that responding primary schools have with secondary schools (% calculated out of the number of primary schools who reported contact with local secondary schools, n=244)

Pupil progress in language learning

Since the 2019 recommendations made in the White Paper (Holmes and Myles, 2019) on Primary Languages Policy in England, efforts have been made to strengthen collaboration between primary and secondary schools. Since 2023, NCLE's Language Hubs programme has encouraged learners to continue with their language education journey, and facilitated connections between primary and secondary schools; a central tenet of NCLE's Language Hubs includes improving Key Stage 2 to 3 transition in the context of language education (NCLE, 2025).

In the state secondary survey, approximately three-fifths of responding schools either carefully consider (32.4 per cent), or somewhat consider (26.7 per cent), the National Curriculum Programmes of Study for the full 7–14 age range when planning for Key Stage 3.

Responding secondary schools were asked to reflect on how well their current Year 7's language learning experiences in Key Stage 2 have prepared

pupils for language learning in Key Stage 3 in comparison to previous cohorts. Figure 8 shows that, consistent with 2024, over three-fifths of respondents consider there to be little change, while around a fifth consider pupils to be less prepared.

In 'other' comments, respondents noted that:

“With such a large number of feeder schools, they all have such diverse experiences and have been taught by non MFL teachers that it is hard to judge.”

“Depends on which school they have come from. Some have been put off languages because of poor input, others have had specialist teachers and know a lot more.”

“We often find that the language they study in Key Stage 3 is not the same as the language they studied at primary school.”

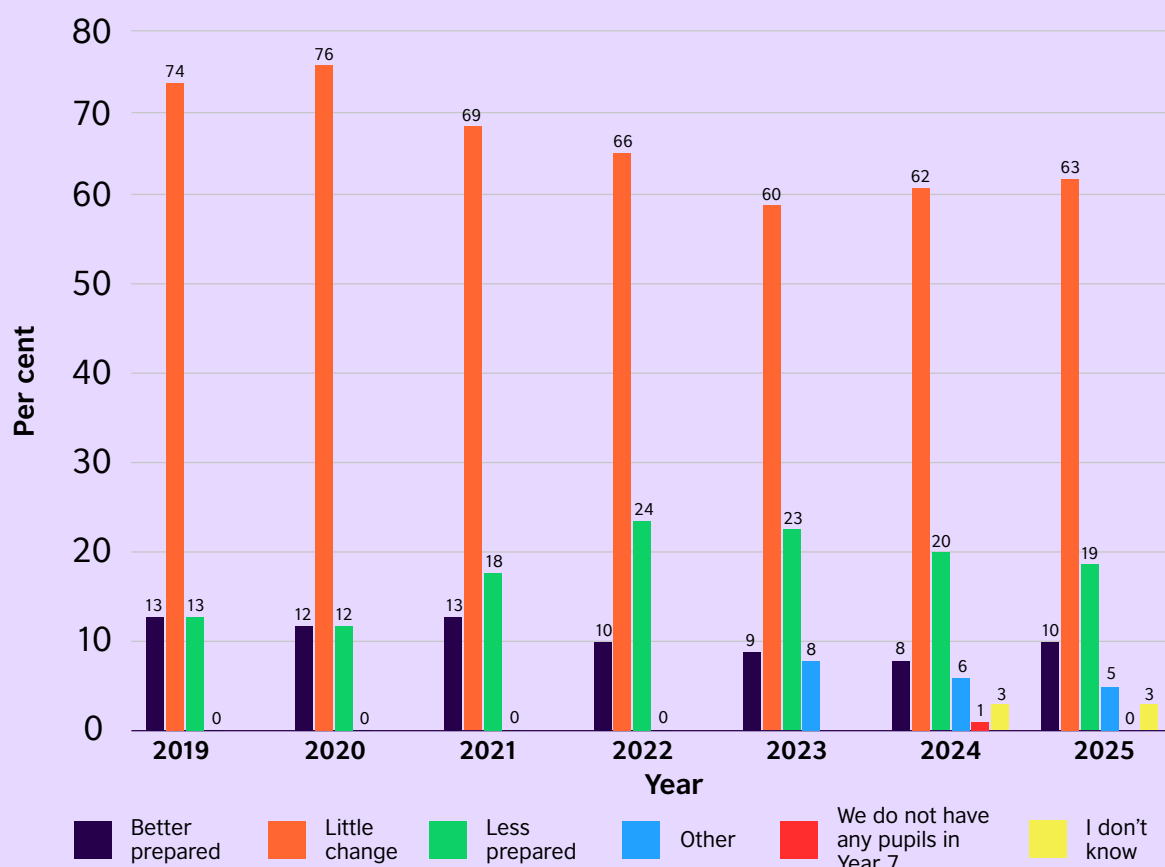


Figure 8: Secondary school respondents' responses to: Thinking about your current Year 7 pupils, how well has their language learning experience in Key Stage 2 prepared them for language learning in Key Stage 3, in comparison to previous cohorts over the last 5 years?

Continuity in Key Stage 2 to 3 transition

State secondary schools surveyed were asked if pupils in their school continue with the same language(s) they learned at Key Stage 2. Table 8 shows that all pupils continue with the same language in only a small number of responding schools; in approximately three quarters of schools surveyed in 2025, some pupils continue with the same language that they learnt in primary school. In ‘other’ comments, secondary school respondents noted:

“There is too much variation in the quality of primary school languages to say who has done what consistently. For us when a school teaches one language for the whole time they are at primary school, this is the best approach.”

“As our pupils come from a range of feeder junior and primary schools there is no continuity as they have had different language learning experiences in KS2.”

	2023 (n=586)	2024 (n=601)	2025 (n=445)
All pupils continue with the same language	3%	2%	2%
The majority of pupils continue with the same language	16%	15%	11%
Some pupils continue with the same language	69%	68%	73%
No, our pupils start a new language from scratch	7%	6%	6%
Other (please comment further)	5%	9%	7%

Table 8: State secondary responses to ‘Do pupils in your school continue with the same language they learned at Key Stage 2?’

Nearly eight out of ten (77.5 per cent) of secondary schools surveyed reported that their school could not organise classes for pupils in Year 7 according to the language(s) they learned at primary school.

Collaboration between primary and secondary schools

Figure 9 shows yearly fluctuations in the percentage of primary schools reporting they receive support from a secondary school in relation to language teaching and training for teachers. In 2025, nine per cent of responding primary schools reported that a local secondary school provided language teaching in their school, while only four per cent reported that a local secondary school had provided training for their language teachers. In ‘other’ comments, one primary practitioner noted difficulty in establishing contact with a local secondary school:

“I invite them to all the language events at our school, French Christmas play, French breakfast cafe, Fashion show etc, but they never come. They often don’t reply.”

Other respondents commented the type of contact they maintain with local secondary schools:

“Our Y6 children visit the school and receive a Spanish lesson taught by Y10. This helps with transition and maintains a friendly link with the languages dept.”

“I have reached out and made contact with our two main secondary schools. I have shadowed teachers in the schools and talked about how to help transition. One school suggested buying a workbook (language gym) so they are familiar with the layout when they arrive. The other school was not so successful since a change of language happens between Y6 and Y7.”

Support from secondary schools for primary languages

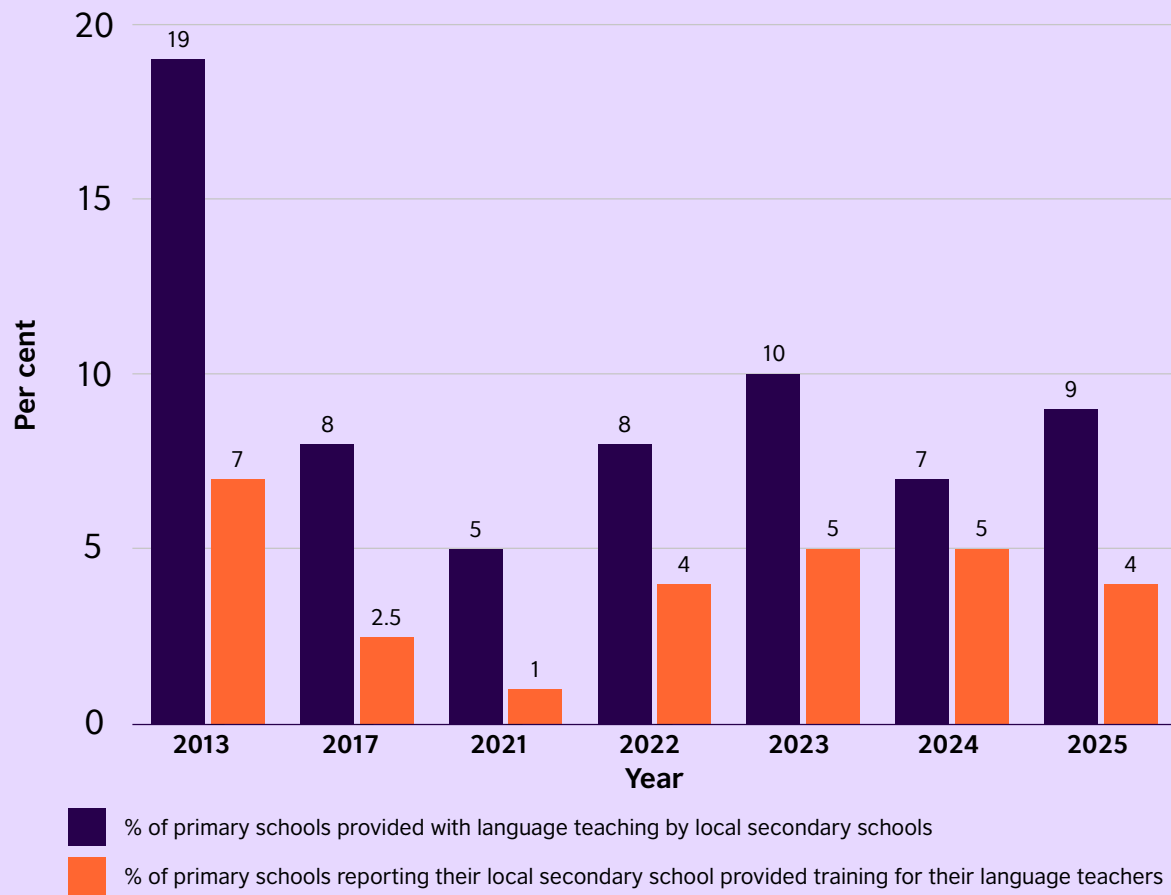


Figure 9: Changes in the percentage of primary schools receiving training and language teaching support from secondary schools over the years

Findings from state secondary schools

After data sets had been cleaned, we received complete responses from 445 age 11–16 or 11–18 schools, giving a response rate of 17 per cent. Responses were received from across the country, with lower rates noted in the North-East attributable to the comparatively higher number of Middle Schools and Senior Schools for whom our survey is not suitable.

Region	Number of responding schools	As a percentage of state secondary schools participating in our survey
East Midlands	31	7.0%
East of England	45	10.1%
London	55	12.4%
North-East	25	5.6%
North-West	57	12.8%
South-East	91	20.4%
South-West	53	11.9%
West Midlands	54	12.1%
Yorkshire and the Humber	34	7.6%

Table 9: Regional locations of participating state secondary schools

State secondary free school meal quintiles

In January 2024, 24.1 per cent of pupils in state secondary schools in England were entitled to Free School Meals (FSME), an increase from 22.7 per cent in the previous year.

We arranged state secondary schools in our achieved sample into quintiles, as per the number of pupils entitled to Free School Meals from the Department for Education’s performance tables data (Table 10). As in previous Language Trends reports, there is an overrepresentation of schools in more affluent areas; it is a real challenge to get schools in the most deprived areas to take part, yet we are so keen to hear their views and better understand the challenges they face in delivering languages education:

Quintile	FSME Range	Percentage participation in Language Trends
1 – most affluent	0–14.2%	31.4%
2	14.3–20.6%	18.5%
3	20.7–27.6%	16.5%
4	27.7–37.8%	19.5%
5 – most deprived	37.9% and above	14.2%

Table 10: State secondary school quintiles

The statistically significant overrepresentation of schools in Quintile 1 (most affluent areas) means that, as with our primary school survey, the data which follow may not be truly representative of the social spectrum.

English as an Additional Language

One in five pupils in England’s state secondary classrooms has English as an Additional Language (EAL), though around a third of these pupils are fluent in English in addition to their first language (DfE, 2020). Fluent means the pupil can operate without EAL support across the curriculum to a level of competence equivalent to that of a pupil who uses English as their first language. Our profile of responding schools corroborates previous research that schools in most deprived areas tend to have more pupils with EAL (see Table 11).

Quintile	Percentage of pupils with EAL in our data
1 – most affluent	12.8%
2	11.7%
3	17.2%
4	22.7%
5 – most deprived	29.8%

Table 11: Percentage of EAL pupils by quintile in responding state secondary schools

Pupils with EAL have a rich linguistic capital and they should thus thrive in the languages classroom. More work is needed to better understand the complex interplay of plurilingualism in instructed settings.

Languages at Key Stage 3

As previously noted, pupils in England are currently entitled to learn a language from ages seven to 14. A majority of schools told us they plan at least somewhat with the full Programme of Study in mind, but a third of schools told us they only consider the Key Stage 3 Programme of Study in their planning. Fifty-eight per cent of schools told us that no pupils are disapplied from learning a language; in those schools where some pupils are taken out of language lessons, the pupils tend to have Special Educational Needs and the decision to remove pupils is taken by a senior member of teaching staff.

A review of the National Curriculum and assessment is ongoing, due to be reported in autumn 2025. We asked survey respondents if they were aware of this review and if they had contributed their views; 56 per cent of teachers were aware of the review but less than ten per cent have contributed to the request for evidence.

Data between 2023 and 2025 continue to show French as the most offered language at Key Stage 3. As we will see later in the report, Spanish appears to retain more pupils at the age 14 transition point. Just one quintile 5 school offers German; in fact, 73 per cent of schools offering German are in the top two quintiles, i.e., with a more favourable FSME statistic than the national average. German also has regional differences; from our data set, schools in London are least likely whilst schools in the South-East and East of England are most likely to offer German.

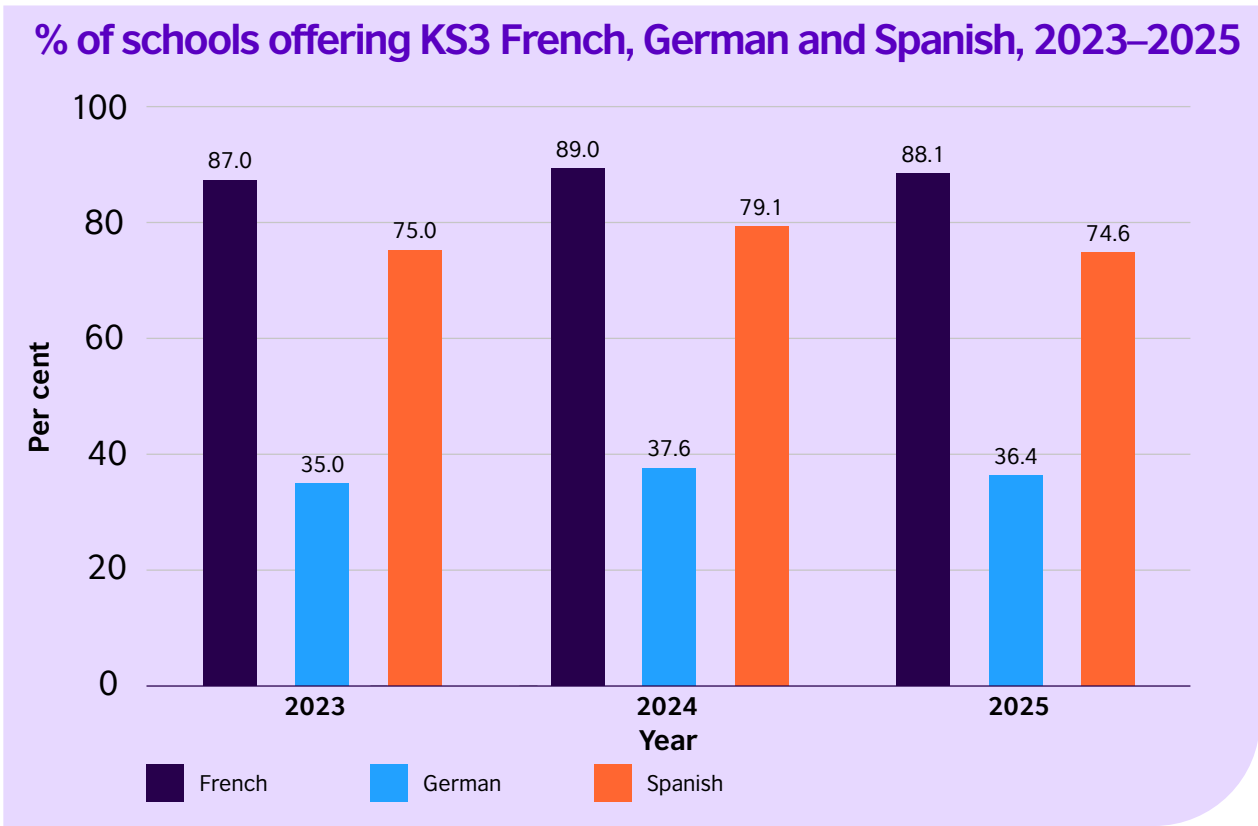


Figure 10: Percentage of state secondary schools offering French, German and Spanish at Key Stage 3 over the past three years

Of course, schools offer languages other than the big three of French, German and Spanish, but they tend to be dwarfed in our data sets. Table 12 shows the range of languages offered as both full curriculum and enrichment (extra-curricular) subjects:

	Ancient Greek	Arabic	Chinese / Mandarin	Italian	Japanese	Latin	Polish	Russian	Urdu	Other
KS3 – full curriculum subject	0.2%	1.3%	7.0%	1.1%	1.3%	6.7%	0.0%	0.7%	1.3%	0.9%
KS3 – enrichment	2.0%	1.6%	5.8%	3.6%	1.8%	6.1%	1.6%	1.3%	0.7%	4.7%

Table 12: Percentage of state secondary schools offering lesser taught languages at Key Stage 3

Where schools offer languages as part of enrichment, a majority conduct this at lunch time or after school. A minority use collapsed timetable days to focus on enrichment languages.

Pedagogical Approach

There is no one correct way to teach languages. It is recognised that there is a variety of approaches and methods. We asked teachers an open ended question as to whether their language department has a preferred pedagogical approach.

One third of responding schools mentioned Extensive Processing Instruction, designed to promote long-term retention, fluency, and communicative competence. Other approaches

mentioned include: Language Driven Pedagogy (adhering to the principles of NCELP) in which three core strands of language knowledge (phonics, vocabulary, and grammar) are carefully woven together to underpin the development of confident communication, cultural understanding, and creative use of language; the ‘Cumbria approach’, where the teacher and pupils speak the target language almost exclusively, with constant interaction in the target language and lessons featuring songs, mimes, a team competition, and competitive activities; as well as more traditional presentation/practice/production principles and the use of parallel texts. Teachers commented:

“We write our own schemes of learning and all teach the same content. Individual teaching style and methods are allowed and encouraged. We encourage variety and challenge and don’t feel that any of the popular approaches (NCELP, EPI) offer enough of this for our students, although we may ‘dip in’ to them.”

“We follow Language Driven Pedagogy scheme of work with adapted resources. Focus on explicit grammar mastery with eye to prepare students for A Level. New approach having previously taught using defined topics similar to a textbook (e.g., environment, school life etc).”

“Extensive Processing Instruction is now fully embedded from Y7 to Y11 in French and Spanish. Use of sentence builders and parallel texts to deliver 7 codified Key Skills per year group, focusing on opinions in Y7, present and near future in Y8 and past, present and future in Y9. Skills run through 6 topics, one per term, and are layered vertically (by target level) and horizontally (to build year on year).”

“We use a mixture of styles. We do use explicit instruction rather than an investigation style approach. We do include the 3 pillars: phonics, vocabulary and grammar. We find there is not much room in the curriculum for the creative and fun things. Any that we do have are planned in! We do use sentence builders and some aspects of EPI approach. But we agree that we

have a variety of learners and a one style approach does not suit all.”

A number of teachers commented that they are required to follow a particular approach common to all schools within their Multi-Academy Trust. Some of these respondents expressed frustration that their professional autonomy as experts in the languages classroom has thus been reduced.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and language teaching

AI and digital technologies have the potential to play a major role in language teaching and learning (OECD, 2024). AI offers personalised, interactive and engaging experiences through chatbots, language generation and adaptive learning. Pupils can receive real-time feedback, using algorithms and data analytics to help focus on areas for development. Crucially, this feedback is not only written, but can also be spoken; speech recognition technology can help pupils to practise their pronunciation, as well as listening skills.

We asked teachers how often their department makes use of AI technology (such as ChatGPT, Diffet, etc) in language teaching. Just twelve per cent of respondents said they use AI every week, but 52 per cent of respondents use AI occasionally (i.e., a few lessons per month). Just 16 per cent of schools allow pupils to use AI to help with their language learning in school.

Languages at Key Stage 4

Although the 16-year-old population increased by 4.6 per cent between 2023 and 2024, and 91.4 per cent of all GCSEs are taken by this age group, it is pleasing to see increases in French, German, Spanish and Other Modern Languages. Investment in government initiatives, such as NCELP and NCLE, together with high quality teaching in classrooms, is paying off. Comparing entry numbers between 2024 and 2019 (pre-pandemic) French has increased by 3 per cent and Spanish has increased by 30.5 per cent and other languages have increased by 34 per cent. Whilst German has declined by 16.1 per cent in the same period, initiatives such as the GIMAGINE project from the Goethe-Institut are helping to stabilise numbers. Overall, it is a most positive picture for the sector when we benchmark data against language learning in other predominantly anglophone countries.

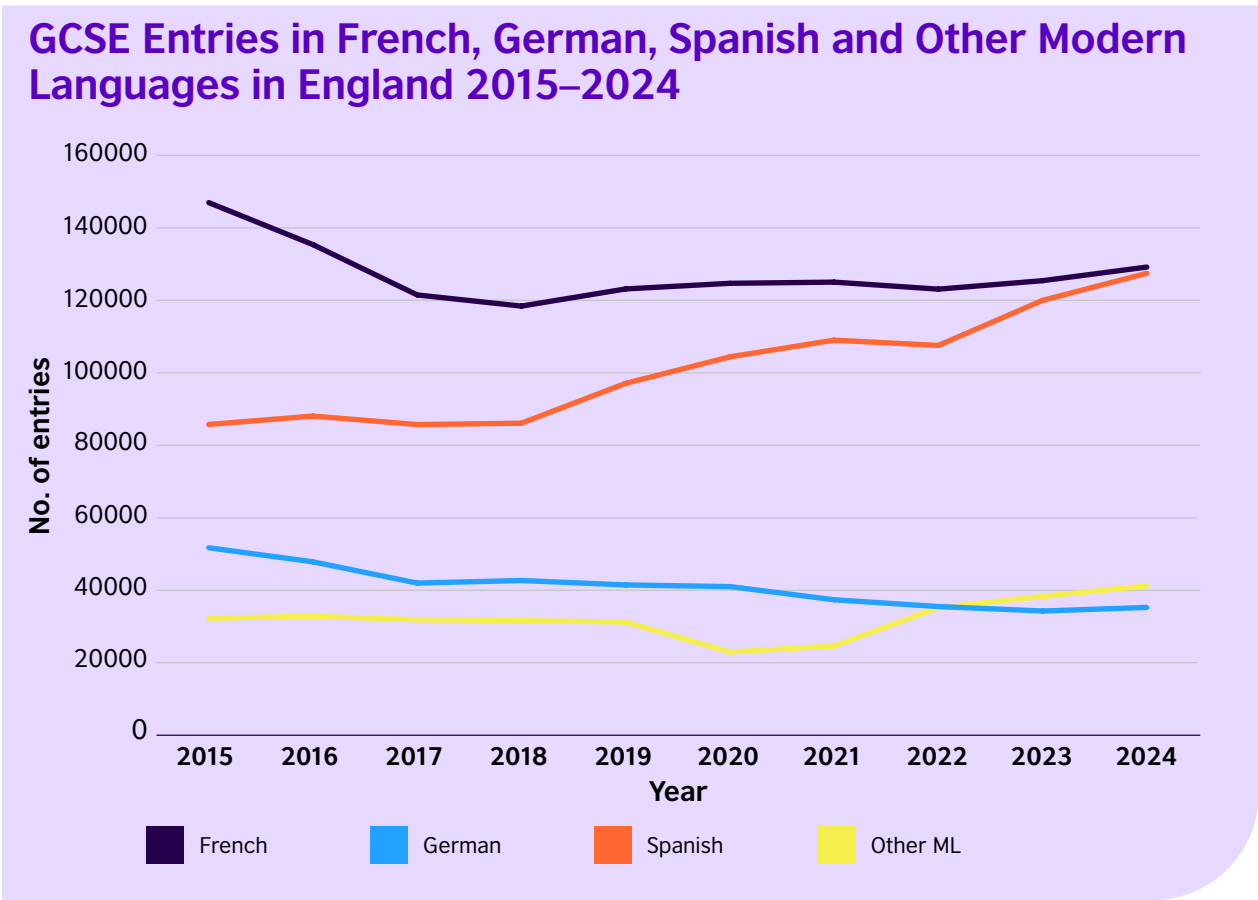


Figure 11: GCSE Entries in French, German, Spanish and Other Modern Languages in England 2015–2024

The approach to grading returned to pre-pandemic arrangements in England in 2023, notwithstanding adjustments in French and German following a review of harsh grading.

GCSEs from Awarding Bodies in England are graded from 9 to 1, with 9 the highest grade. Grade 4 is considered a standard pass. Grades across all GCSE subjects see 21.8 per cent of grades at Grade 7 and above and 67.6 per cent of grades at 4/C and above. Table 13 shows that pupils of languages are consistently performing higher than the all GCSE subject average:

	All GCSE subjects	French	German	Spanish	Other Modern Languages
Grade 7 and above	21.8%	28%	32.1%	26.7%	71.7%
Grade 4 and above	67.6%	71.2%	77.5%	69.8%	92.5%

Table 13: Cumulative percentages of pupils attaining GCSE grades (2024)

As reported in previous Language Trends, the government recognised harsh grading in some MFL subjects as a reality and made an adjustment to GCSE French and German in 2020 (delayed to 2022 due to the Covid-19 pandemic), to bring awarding into line with Spanish. Grading is a complex statistical exercise undertaken by awarding bodies: there remains work to be done to level the field; for example, in biology 82.9 per cent of candidates achieved a grade 4 or above.

Teachers in our data set report that on average 53 per cent of their Year 11 pupils are currently learning a language for GCSE; this continues to be far off the government’s EBacc ambition of 90 per cent. When we break the data down into quintiles, we can see that schools in more affluent areas are more likely, by over 20 percentage points, to have more pupils learning a language (Table 14).

Quintile	Average percentage of pupils in Year 11 studying a language by teacher estimate
Quintile 1 – most affluent	69%
Quintile 2	47%
Quintile 3	46%
Quintile 4	46%
Quintile 5 – most deprived	47%

Table 14: Average percentage of pupils in Year 11 studying a language by teacher estimate

We asked teachers their perceptions of take-up for languages at Key Stage 4 (Figure 12).

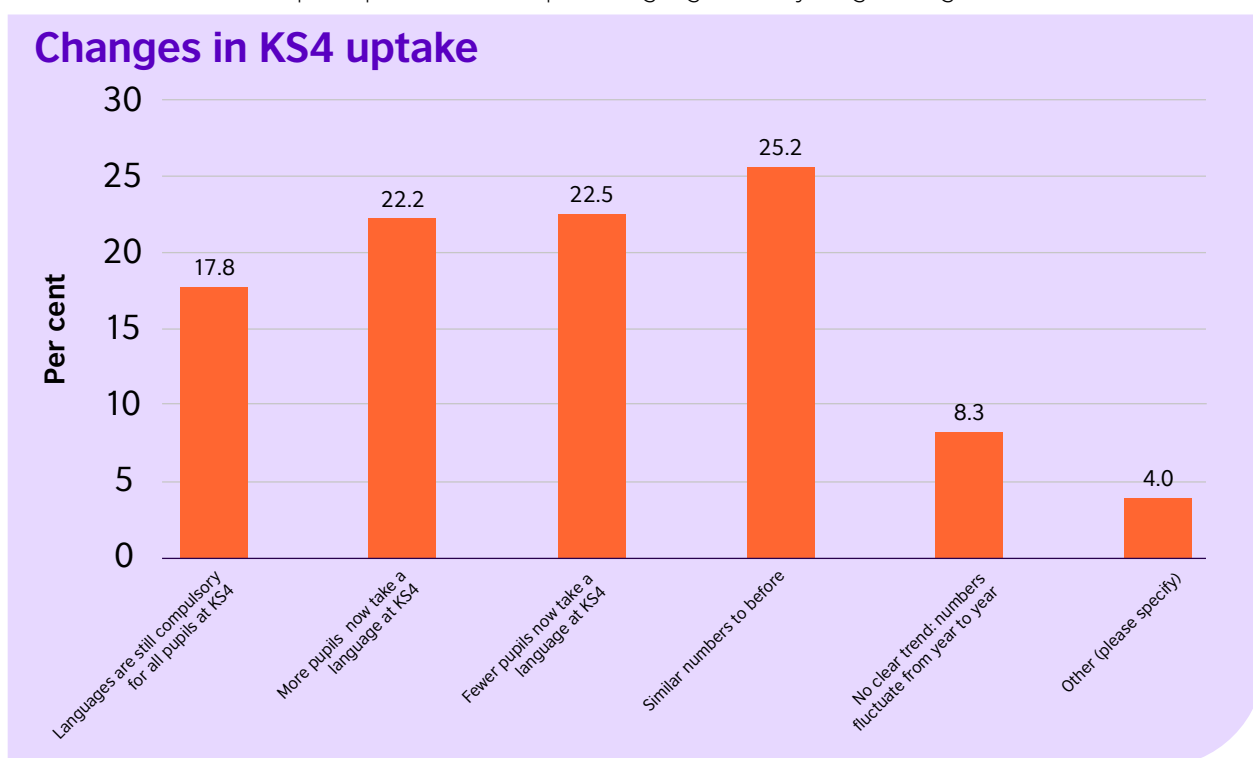


Figure 12: State school teachers' perceptions of language uptake over the past three years at Key Stage 4

Data in Figure 12 are broadly in line with data collected in answering the same question in 2023, though then 30 per cent of teachers thought more pupils were taking a language in the three years prior (2025 is 22 per cent). It will be important to continue monitoring entry levels over the coming years. However, the new GCSE in French, German and Spanish for first teaching from September 2024 has had a rather positive reception.

We asked teachers in state schools in 2023 if they thought the new GCSE would have a positive or negative impact on uptake: 63 per cent of teachers did not expect any change, 18 per cent of teachers thought numbers would go up, 12 per cent did not know and 7 per cent of teachers thought numbers would decrease. We asked a similar, though not identical question this year:

Large negative impact (numbers will go down significantly)	0.7%
Small negative impact (numbers will go down slightly)	2.5%
I do not expect any impact, positive or negative	50.8%
Small positive impact (numbers will go up slightly)	34.2%
Large positive impact (numbers will go up significantly)	2.5%
I don't know	8.8%

Table 15: Teachers' responses to the question 'To what extent do you think the new GCSE in French, German and Spanish that is now underway with YR10 pupils will have a positive or negative impact on uptake at GCSE?'

There are now less people on the fence and more optimism that numbers will go up. Summer 2026 will see the first awarding of the new GCSE in French, German and Spanish and it is hoped that the upward trajectory noted in this year's statistics will continue as the new specifications take root.

In addition, three quarters of teachers said that the new GCSE had changed the way they plan their curriculum. Comments included:

“Yes, we have to adapt our teaching resources to ensure all vocabulary is covered. We are also adapting our resources to reflect the new GCSE exam.”

“Yes, we have changed exam board and focused on vocabulary that is included in the specification within curriculum resources. More dictation, more phonics teaching.”

“Not hugely. We have continued with our phonics programme and have found that the ‘LDP pedagogy’ that we use in KS3 has benefitted phonics awareness and is helping

students perform well for read aloud and dictation.”

“Yes. Clearer mapping of vocabulary and phonics, ensuring phonics are embedded. Clearer recycling of key grammatical structures. More speaking opportunities.”

Home, Heritage and Community Languages at Key Stage 4

Languages other than English used in daily life at home, in school and in local communities are sometimes known as home, heritage and community languages (HHCL). Specifically, (i) a home language is a language learned in childhood in the home, (ii) a heritage language is a minority language that is often indigenous such as Irish, Gaelic or Scots, Welsh, or Cornish but can also refer to languages which have developed in local communities as a result of immigration over time, or through new arrivals to the local area and (iii) community languages are generally those spoken by members of minority groups or communities within a majority language context.

Type of support	2024	2025
The school pays examination entry fees for pupils	79%	78%
The school is aware of complimentary schools (e.g. Supplementary / Saturday schools) but does not collaborate with them	13%	15%
The school actively collaborates with and promotes Saturday schools	2%	5%
The school facilitates teaching of ‘community’ languages during the school day	4%	6%
No support provided	11%	12%
Other (please specify)	18%	15%

Table 16: Support offered by schools to pupils to take examinations in home, heritage and community languages

Table 16 shows there is little change year on year. The schools which provide ‘no support’ are all in quintiles 4 and 5 i.e., below the FSME average; this is further evidence that those pupils in the most deprived areas have the least support beyond the National Curriculum.

Languages at A-level

Across the UK, A-level entries for all ages increased by 2.2 per cent in 2024. In summer 2024, the 18-year-old population was up by 0.9 per cent from 729,024 to 735,259; the 19-year-old

population was up by 1.4 per cent from 743,747 to 753,892, and female students made up 54.1 per cent of A-level entries.

It is good news for MFL; French, German and Spanish all show an upward trend year on year from 2023 and, when combined, Other Modern Languages are also on the up. As a community of linguists, we must celebrate this turning of the tides and work to increase uptake in the coming years.

In England, for the sixth year running, Spanish was the most popular A-level language according to official exam data, in contrast to primary and Key Stage 3 where French remains the most taught language. Fusing our data with publicly available data we can with confidence draw the inference that Spanish retains more pupils at age 14 and age 16 transition points than French.

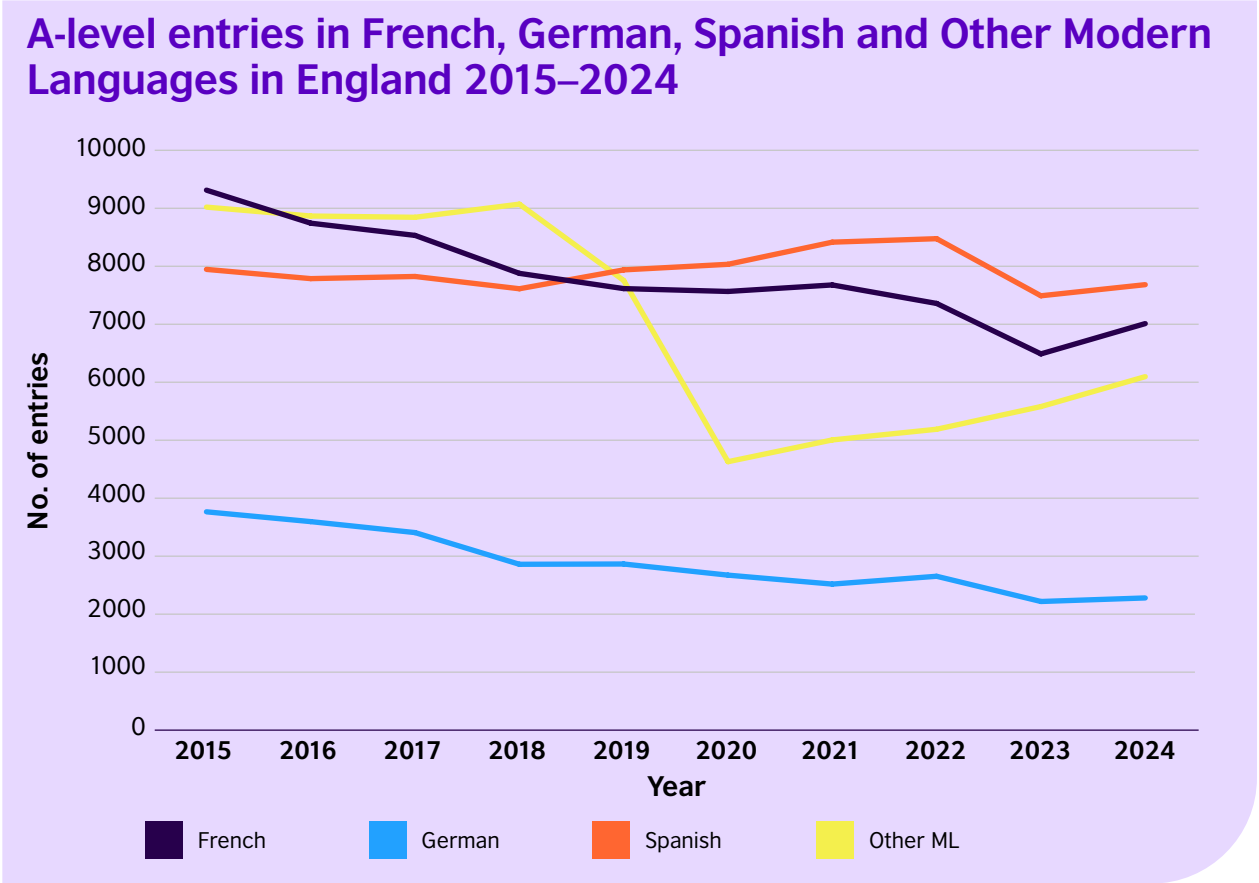


Figure 13: A-level entries in French, German, Spanish and Other Modern Languages in England 2015–2024

Just over half of the schools in our data set have post-16 provision in languages (though when we look at quintile 5 schools in isolation this figure is just 31 per cent), either delivered within the school or in concert with a neighbouring school.

No. of post-16 pupils	Year 12 2023/24	Year 12 2024/25	Year 13 2023/24	Year 13 2024/25
5 or fewer	34%	36%	36%	41%
6–10	20%	18%	20%	15%
11–15	12%	11%	9%	11%
15–20	8%	8%	8%	8%
20+	11%	13%	10%	10%
None	16%	14%	18%	15%

Table 17: State secondary teacher responses to how many post-16 pupils in their school currently study one or more languages

We again asked teachers what happens whenever not enough pupils choose a language for A-level. The number for ‘enough’ varies greatly from school to school; some teachers have targets of as high as 15 pupils for a class to run. In our data set, if three pupils in each of the 35 per cent of schools which do not run classes initially wanted to do a language, then that is 251 young people for whom the language learning journey is cut short due to systemic barriers.

	2023/24	2024/25
Year 12 and Year 13 classes are taught together	13%	13%
Classes do not run	39%	35%
Class run at a reduced timetable	28%	25%
Shared arrangements with another school	10%	11%
Other (please give details)	34%	29%

Table 18: What arrangements are in place, if any, when only a few pupils wish to study a language post-16?

Teachers commented:

“Our SLT ask for 10 which is completely unrealistic looking at numbers over the past 20 years and the reduced uptake at GCSE. We have to fight and negotiate to run groups each year.”

“We are told that there is a minimum number, but this number is not made explicit, despite being asked for. In the past 5 students has been allowed, but with current budgetary constraints I am not sure for how much longer this is sustainable”.

“We are fighting for survival with French every year with around five to seven students in a year group. Spanish was a popular option before, but due to the new T level courses numbers dropped.”

A small number of schools (3.6 per cent) collaborate with a local university as part of an Ambassador or Mentoring scheme where undergraduate students mentor pupils in languages. One teacher commented:

“This is a fantastic way to engage university students in the teaching profession. They provide support for staff and a relatable example of where studying languages can lead pupils.”

Recruitment of MFL Teaching Staff

Compared to 2023/24, more MFL student teachers were recruited in 2024/25 in England. Nevertheless, only 43 per cent of the recruitment target was met in 2024/25. Thirty-four per cent of applicants in MFL were non-UK-domiciled, compared to 24 per cent of all other applicants. Non-UK-domiciled applicants tend to experience much higher rejection rates than domestic applicants. Data shows that in MFL, the rejection rate for non-UK candidates was almost double that for UK candidates in 2024/25 (McLean and Worth, 2025). Table 19 shows that, from our *Language Trends 2025* data, the recruitment of qualified teachers of MFL is an issue for two thirds of state secondary schools.

	State Secondary 2024	State Secondary 2025
Yes, a major issue	33%	31%
Yes, a minor issue	31%	32%
No, not an issue	30%	31.0%
I don't know	3%	2.5%
Other	3%	3.5%

Table 19: Teachers' responses to the question on whether recruitment of languages teachers is an issue

Recruitment issues are more acute in schools in areas of social deprivation; 68 per cent of quintile 5 schools have problems attracting MFL teachers compared to 57 per cent of quintile 1 schools.

International engagement in state secondary schools

We have been keeping a close eye on the international dimension of school life, which naturally suffered during the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2023/24, 36 per cent of schools told us they don't have any international opportunities; in 2024/25 this figure is just 13 per cent. It is most pleasing to report that opportunities for international engagement are on the up, with clear evidence that schools have nearly returned to pre-pandemic levels:

	Percentage of responding schools
Pupils go on trips abroad	74%
We employ language assistants	27%
We engage with cultural institutes (e.g. Confucius Institute, Goethe-Institut, Institut français, Gael Linn, Consejería de Educación)	28%
The school has one or more partner schools abroad	27%
The school has combined school trips abroad with other departments	22%
Pupils can do work experience abroad	7%
British Council international opportunities	10%
None	13%
Other	7%

Table 20: Opportunities for pupils and/or teachers to gain international experience in responding state secondary schools (respondents ticked all that applied)

Just over 49 per cent of respondents told us they had never heard of the Turing scheme; a further 46 per cent are aware but have not applied, and 4.7 per cent have applied and had a successful bid.

Seventeen per cent of schools collaborate with the Goethe-Institut; over three quarters of these schools are in quintiles 1 and 2. A similar number collaborate with the Institut Français; 6.5 out of 10 of these schools are in quintiles 1 and 2. Of those schools which told us they engage with the Spanish Consejería de Educación, four out of five are in quintiles 1 and 2 (i.e., in more affluent areas).

Language assistants are less likely to be employed in state secondary schools than in independent schools (employed either privately or through the British Council scheme). Quintile 5 schools are the least likely to employ language assistants.

	Percentage of responding state secondary schools
French speaking Language Assistant	22.7%
German speaking Language Assistant	12.8%
Mandarin speaking Language Assistant	4.3%
Spanish speaking Language Assistant	20.9%
Language Assistant for other language (e.g., Arabic, Italian, Russian, Japanese)	1.3%

Table 21: Language Assistants employed in responding state secondary schools

Findings from independent secondary schools

Sixty-three independent secondary schools in England participated in the *Language Trends 2025* survey in the following locations:

Location	No. of responding schools
East Midlands and the Humber	5
East of England and North-East London	5
Lancashire and West Yorkshire	4
North of England	10
North-West London and South-Central England	3
South-East England and South London	21
South-West England	5
West Midlands	10

Table 22: Regional locations of participating independent secondary schools

Email invites were delivered to 532 independent secondary school inboxes on our mailing list, resulting in a response rate of 12 per cent. Due to less than one hundred independent schools responding, the ensuing findings and data are presented as raw figures.

Following the recent curriculum and assessment review in England, independent schools surveyed were asked if they were aware of the review and had the opportunity to contribute. Thirty schools reported that they were aware of the review, of which 14 contributed to. Of course, independent schools do not need to follow the National Curriculum, but it is interesting that many MFL departments are plugged in to these developments.

Entrance exams in independent schools

Unlike state schools, independent schools do not receive government funding and are not obliged to follow the National Curriculum. The survey asked respondents the percentage of pupils that enter their school using the Common Entrance Exam, a selective admissions process for pupils wishing to

attend independent secondary schools.⁶ Amongst participating respondents, approximately two-thirds (40 schools out of 63) do not use the Common Entrance Exam. Fifty-one schools reported that various percentages of pupils will enter using their own school's entrance test, including 32 schools who noted that all pupils enter the school via these tests. Of those schools using their own entrance tests, seven reported that a Modern Foreign Language (MFL) is assessed.

Language provision and enrichment subjects in independent schools

The two most taught languages in independent schools surveyed are French and Spanish, both of which are taught in over four out of five responding schools in Key Stages 3 and 4. There is provision for Latin in approximately seven out of ten responding schools in Key Stages 3 and 4, and there is post-16 provision in two-thirds of schools surveyed. German is taught in more than half of schools surveyed throughout the key stages (see Table 23).

	French	German	Latin	Spanish
Key Stage 3	56	38	45	55
Key Stage 4	56	41	44	55
Post-16	50	37	42	51

Table 23: Provision of French, German, Latin and Spanish in independent secondary schools surveyed

6 For further information, see <https://www.isc.co.uk/schools/sub-pages/common-entrance/>.

Independent schools surveyed also offer several other languages throughout the key stages and as enrichment subjects (see Figure 14).

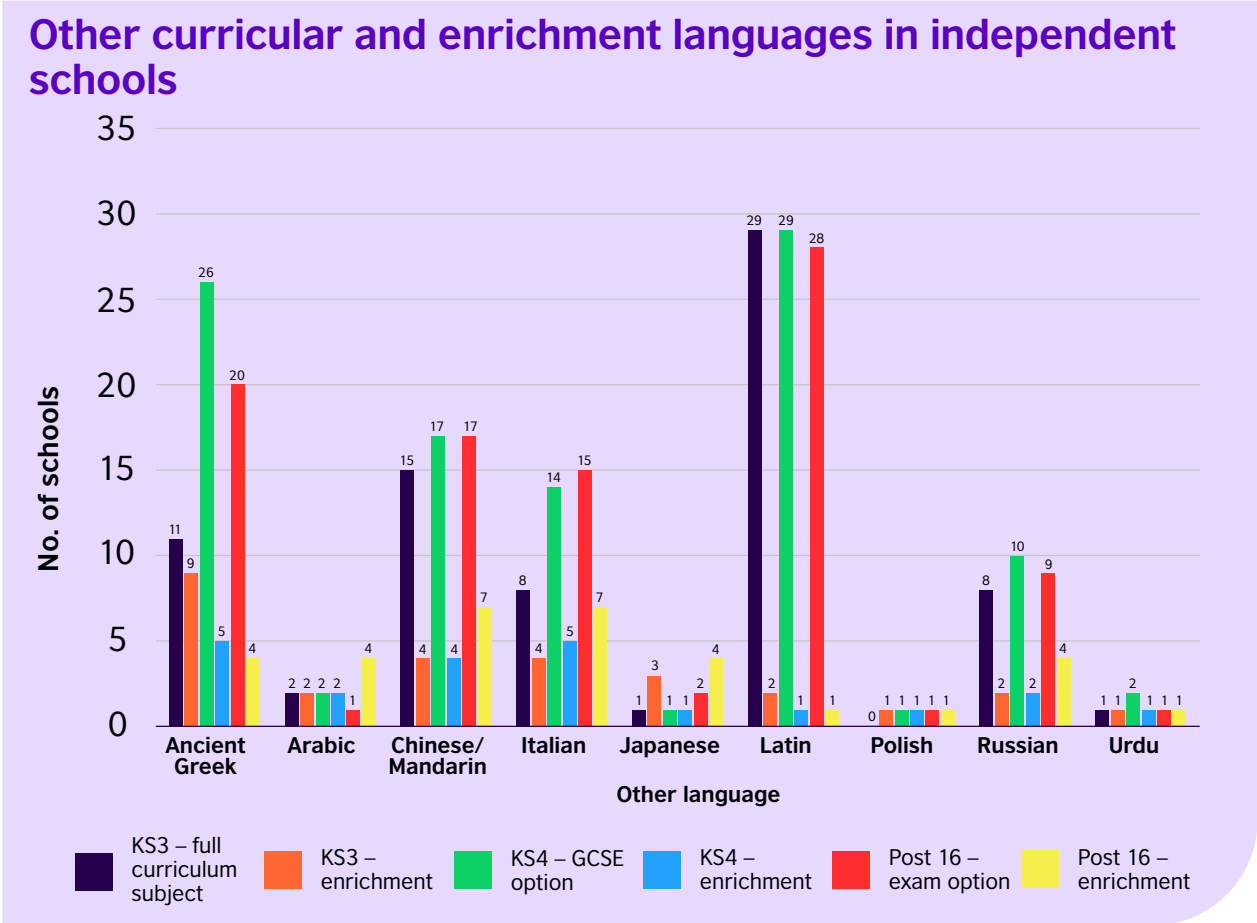


Figure 14: Other curricular and enrichment language subjects offered in participating independent secondary schools

In regard to enrichment subjects, independent schools with such provision were asked at which point in the school day are these subjects offered. One school provides enrichment language lessons before school, 13 during lunchtime, and 12 after school; several schools also noted other arrangements in place for enrichment language lessons, including during timetabled enrichment slots and free periods in sixth form.

Home, Heritage and Community Languages in independent schools

Nearly all (53 out of 63) independent schools surveyed reported that their pupils have opportunities to take exams in the languages spoken in their homes or communities.

Twenty-two independent schools surveyed pay examination fees for pupils wishing to undertake HHCL examinations; however, 19 out of 63 respondents reported that there is a lack of support provided to pupils (Table 24). In ‘other’ comments, several respondents noted that their school supports HHCL exams in alternative ways than those listed in Table 24, including acting as an examination centre for pupils studying home languages, facilitating exams and finding examiners, and providing mock exams.

Type of support	No. of responding schools
The school pays examination entry fees for pupils	22
The school is aware of Saturday schools but does not collaborate with them	13
The school actively collaborates with and promotes Saturday schools	1
The school facilitates teaching of 'community' languages during the school day	6
No support provided	19
Other (please specify)	18

Table 24: Support offered by responding independent schools to pupils to take examinations in home, heritage and community languages (HHCL). Respondents ticked all that applied.

Key Stage 4 language examinations in independent schools

Only two independent schools surveyed indicated that they had no Year 10 learners in the 2024/25 school year learning a language for GCSE/iGCSE or other Level 2 qualification. For more than half of independent respondents, 70 per cent and above of their Year 10 cohort were studying a language (including 16 respondents who noted that all their Year 10 learn a language).

Five responding independent schools use the iGCSE qualification, with most schools using GCSE qualifications (n=40), and some use a combination of the two (n=14). Schools surveyed provided the following comments about GCSE/iGCSE qualifications:

“We have a strong preference for the iGCSE because we have historically found the marking to be more reliable. The GCSE in Russian is particularly poor – listening paper too hard, papers littered with errors and bad Russian. etc.”

“We used to do iGCSE in all languages. French and Spanish then moved to GCSE. German stayed with iGCSE. Grades have been better in

French and Spanish so for the new GCSE we are all doing AQA. This ties in with Italian.”

“We are moving away from iGCSE in French, Spanish and German. We stick to iGCSE in Chinese to provide appropriate challenge.”

“I think that we will change to the GCSE. The iGCSE hasn’t changed for 8 years and our students are finding it increasingly challenging.

Key Stage 4 uptake in independent schools

Twenty-two responding independent schools reported that languages are still compulsory for pupils at Key Stage 4 in their school (see Table 25). Only four respondents perceive that more pupils now take a language, compared to 15 respondents who report fewer pupils taking a language at Key Stage 4. Some respondents commented ‘other’:

“Our school has just removed language learning from the Core GCSE curriculum.”

“100% in theory BUT we have noted a higher % of disapplications.”

How has the proportion of pupils studying a language in Key Stage 4 changed?	No. of responding schools
Languages are still compulsory for all pupils at KS4	22
More pupils now take a language at KS4	4
Fewer pupils now take a language at KS4	15
Similar numbers to before	12
No clear trend: numbers fluctuate from year to year	5
Other (please specify)	5

Table 25: Independent teachers' perceptions of language uptake at Key Stage 4

Eighteen of the schools surveyed have policies that strongly recommend all pupils take a language in Key Stage 4; however, nine schools reported that lower than average attaining pupils are discouraged from choosing a language, and classes do not run if there are not enough pupils in six independent schools surveyed.

Teachers surveyed in independent schools were asked about the impact of the new GCSE in French, German and Spanish on uptake (Table 26); no schools expect a negative impact, while 24 do not expect any impact, positive or negative. Although 13 responding schools are unsure about the potential impact, 11 respondents are optimistic that numbers will go up slightly.

	No. of responding schools
I do not expect any impact, positive or negative	24
I don't know	13
Large negative impact (numbers will go down significantly)	0
Large positive impact (numbers will go up significantly)	0
Not applicable to my school	12
Small negative impact (numbers will go down slightly)	0
Small positive impact (numbers will go up slightly)	11
Unanswered	3

Table 26: Independent teachers' responses to the question 'To what extent do you think the new GCSE in French, German and Spanish that is now underway with YR10 pupils will have a positive or negative impact on uptake at GCSE?'

Post-16 language provision in independent schools

Fifty-four independent schools who responded to the survey have post-16 provision in languages. In the 2024/25 school year, schools reported the following post-16 language learner numbers (Table 27):

No. of post-16 pupils	Year 12	Year 13
5 or fewer	13	17
6–10	8	7
11–15	6	7
15–20	5	3
More than 20	13	15
None	8	4

Table 27: Number of post-16 pupils in the 2024/25 school year studying one or more languages in responding independent schools

For over half of independent respondents (n=35/63), languages classes will run whatever the number, even if there are only a few language learners; in other schools, classes run at a reduced timetable (n=19) when there are low pupil numbers.

Very few schools reported that uptake has increased in their school for post-16 languages (see Table 28). Conversely, uptake has visibly decreased for French in 21 schools, German in 13 schools, Latin in 20 schools, and Spanish in 16 schools.

	Introduced as a new A-level	Take-up has increased	Take-up stable	Takeup has decreased	Subject discontinued during past three years	Not taught in my school in past three years
French	0	5	22	21	0	5
German	1	7	18	13	2	12
Latin	0	3	20	20	4	8
Mandarin	1	3	11	4	2	32
Russian	1	0	6	3	2	41
Spanish	1	7	26	16	0	4

Table 28: Independent teachers' perceptions of changes in take-up and provision for languages post-16 in their school

In commenting on these changes, one teacher noted that:

“Spanish take-up for next year = 0, last year = 6, the year before = 4. Students would take the language if they were offered 4 option choices, but Maths and Sciences remain the priority and are seen as the best subjects for future employment. A level languages are difficult and it is difficult to achieve the top grades. Students know this and so choose easier subjects.’

International dimension in independent schools

Sixty out of sixty-three independent schools surveyed reported opportunities for their pupils and/or teachers to gain international experience in their school (see Table 29).

	No. of responding schools
Pupils go on trips abroad	55
We employ language assistants	42
We engage with cultural institutes (e.g. Confucius Institute, Goethe-Institut, Institut Français, Gael Linn, Consejería de Educación)	28
The school has one or more partner schools abroad	25
The school has combined school trips abroad with other departments	23
Pupils can do work experience abroad	15
Other (please specify)	7
British Council international opportunities	4

Table 29: Opportunities for pupils and/or teachers to gain international experience in responding independent secondary schools (respondents ticked all that applied)

In total, 42 independent schools employ language assistants in the following languages:

	No. of responding schools
French speaking Language Assistant	38
German speaking Language Assistant	34
Mandarin speaking Language Assistant	15
Spanish speaking Language Assistant	43
Language Assistant for other language (Arabic, Italian, Russian, Japanese)	12

Table 30: Language Assistants employed in responding independent schools

Teacher recruitment in independent secondary schools

Recruitment of qualified language teachers is an issue in over half (n=35) of independent schools surveyed (see Figure 15). Approximately one third of respondents did not report teacher recruitment to be an issue.

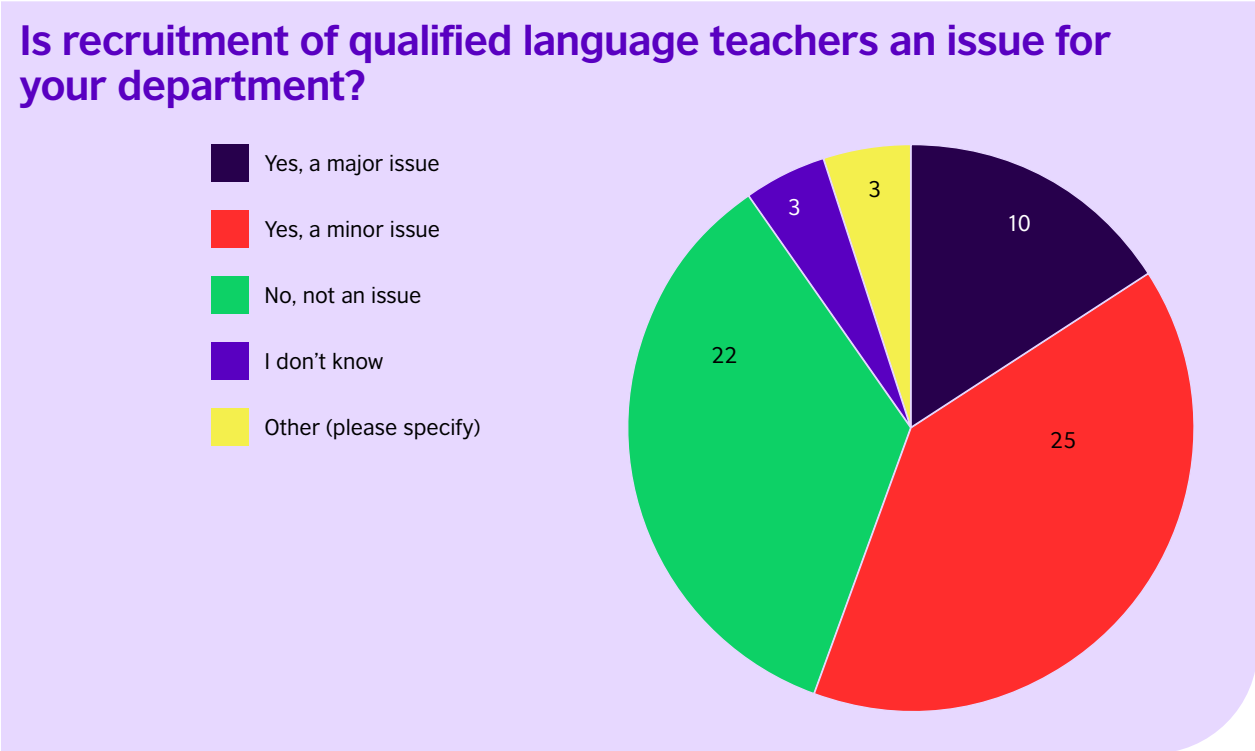


Figure 15: Answers from teachers in independent schools to 'Is recruitment of qualified teachers an issue for your department?'

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology in the independent languages classroom

Most participating independent schools reported the use of AI in language teaching (see Figure 16), either regularly every week (n=15), or occasionally in a few lessons per month (n=42).

Learners are allowed to use AI technology to support their language learning in approximately seven out of ten responding independent schools, and teachers commented the following on learner AI usage:

"They do [use AI to support their learning], but I think that AI is not positive for real language learning. Students look to AI and don't look to understand and so their writing and their real communication is endangered."

"As part of their learning, in particular pronunciation practice, yes. Not in support of their own language creation."

“A level learners use AI to collect up to date facts and data on subjects such as youth unemployment figures in Spain – rather than rely on figures printed in a textbook 15 years ago.”

Frequency of AI usage in language teaching

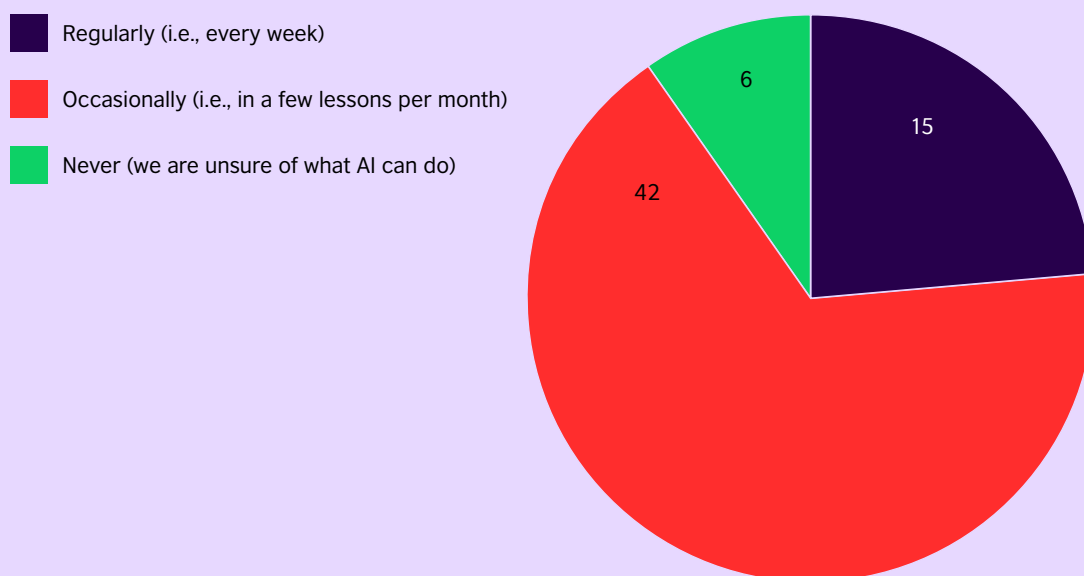


Figure 16: Responses from independent schools to 'How often does your department make use of AI technology (such as ChatGPT, Diffet, etc) in language teaching?'

Conclusion

It is a good news story that entries for GCSE languages have increased from 2023 to 2024 and we can see through our data that the tide is turning. Likewise at A-level, numbers are increasing. As previously suggested by the Language Trends series, if current trends continue, it is likely that Spanish will overtake French as the most popular GCSE in the next two years; it's place as the most popular A level language is now secure.

In primary schools, there remains work to be done to recognise the importance of languages on the curriculum and efforts to improve transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 need to be refined through further investment. Teachers are keen to teach languages, but the overwhelming message is that they need more resources and upskilling in languages. Artificial Intelligence has the potential to transform teaching and learning of languages and its use could be further explored, particularly in the primary sector where there are many non-specialist teachers.

In state secondary and independent schools, the growth of the international dimension is pleasing to see. Coupled with the generally positive reception of the new GCSE in French, German and Spanish, there is every reason to hope that the future of language learning in England's schools is on a more stable footing than in recent years. Nevertheless, the social disparities highlighted in this report are a cause for concern; resources need to be targeted at those pupils who are most disadvantaged, so that all children have an opportunity to excel in language learning.

Good quality language teaching can best be delivered by teachers who have the necessary subject knowledge and pedagogical skills in second language education; it is worrying that recruitment of MFL teachers is below target, despite financial incentives to undertake initial teacher training or education. State and independent schools are struggling to fill vacancies and pupils' success will only be achieved if we have the right languages teachers in the right classrooms delivering the curriculum.

By working together, the languages community can achieve great things in the near future, as it has done so over recent years. Let's continue to champion the importance of all languages taught and spoken in our schools. On y va! Auf geht's! ¡Vamos!

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