

ALL Briefing No 5 Date : October 2018

**Theme: Language Trends 2018**

**Background:**

The annual Language Trends survey reviews developments and changes in the field of Language teaching and learning, with a focus on schools.

The 2018 Language Trends survey was published by British Council <https://www.britishcouncil.org/research/language-trends-2018>

**Some key messages :**

The survey highlights a widening gap in **pupils' access** to the study of foreign languages, indicating that pupils in poorer areas in England are more likely to be missing out on a chance to learn foreign languages in school.

‘Schools in more disadvantaged circumstances tend to dedicate a shorter time to languages in Key Stage 3, allow pupils to drop languages after only two years and have lower participation at GCSE. Independent schools have higher take up and more languages on offer, and provide more opportunities than state schools for international experience. However, both state and independent schools report an increasing concentration of high and middle-attaining pupils in GCSE languages, to the exclusion of those of lower ability or with special educational needs.’

In the Primary sector:

‘Languages remain a marginal subject which many primary schools find challenging to deliver alongside many other competing demands.’

In the Secondary sector some schools are implementing a **two-year Key Stage 3**, meaning that pupils in those schools may not study a foreign language after Year 8. Also:

‘Post-16 language study remains a concern and the vast majority of schools have now withdrawn from offering AS courses, meaning that pupils are studying three rather than four subjects post 16. In a context where sciences and mathematics are promoted heavily and demanding new A Level specifications, this is affecting languages disproportionately.’

Examinations in Secondary sector:

‘In Summer 2018 the first cohorts sat the new GCSE examination and the new A-level examination substantial number of comments from state sector respondents relate to the pressure on teachers caused by the pace of this and other curriculum changes.

The survey indicates that many **EU nationals** (including potentially native speaker Language teachers) are still unclear as to whether their residency will be secure after March 29th 2019 – and have already decided to return home rather than face the uncertainty.

‘Just over a third (34%) of state secondary schools report that leaving the European Union is having a negative impact on language learning, either through student motivation and/or parental attitudes towards the subject..’

There are consequential teacher supply issues:

‘Language departments depend heavily on teachers who are citizens of other EU countries: 67% of state secondaries and 78% of independent schools report having one or more language teachers who are citizens of other EU countries without UK citizenship. The majority of state schools are already finding it difficult to recruit teachers for some languages or combinations of languages ...’

**Points for reflection / action:**

**Issues you may wish to discuss with colleagues / your department:**

*‘‘The new GCSE will make “better linguists” but this is only true for the few higher attaining pupils’*

*‘‘The new GCSEs are a much better preparation for A Levels… unfortunately, they are also very much more difficult, which deters many potential candidates.’’*

What is the wider rationale for pupils in your area to be learning a Language or Languages – in the context of social mobility and aspiration?

Is this given sufficient profile in your Departmental / School statements?

How do / could you promote this rationale within your community?

**Issues you may wish to consider if you are a school teacher :**

You may wish to clarify points raised in this report with your Senior Leadership, or with Governors, especially if your school has a strong policy of social inclusion, raising aspiration etc. which could be better reflected in your Languages provision or profile.

ALL Members recognise that colleagues who have come to the UK as teachers of their own Languages make a huge contribution to the work of our profession You may wish to seek recognition and support from your Leadership for such colleagues in your establishment, in a period of some uncertainty while we await clarification concerning status.

**Issues to consider locally or nationally :**

You may wish to select quotations from the report to include in a letter to those with responsibility or accountability, locally or nationally, for supporting or managing Language provision to raise their awareness of issues that concern you.

These might include some of the following, among others:

* The appropriateness of the GCSE examination for all pupils;
* The lack of alternatives to the GCSE qualification;
* The lack of accreditation for many Languages;
* Schools’ attitudes to the EBacc;
* Severe grading
* Lack of openings for double linguists

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