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Making languages count

Modern foreign languages in secondary schools
and Learning Pathways 14–19

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Information

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Modern foreign languages in secondary schools and Learning Pathways 14–19

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| Audience | Bodies concerned with education and training in Wales, including local authorities; headteachers and governing bodies of maintained secondary schools; professional associations; Higher Education Funding Council for Wales; higher education institutions; further education colleges; Colegau Cymru/Colleges Wales; British Council; European Commission Office in Wales; private training providers; employer organisations and forums; Sector Skills Councils; Careers Wales; CILT Cymru; Welsh Language Board; Estyn; National Institute of Adult Continuing Education; and voluntary and community organisations. |
| Overview | This document sets out the action to be taken to improve the learning and teaching of modern foreign languages in secondary schools and Learning Pathways 14–19 in Wales. Modern foreign languages are defined in the national curriculum for Wales as European or world languages such as Arabic, French, German, Japanese, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish and Urdu. |
| Action required | As set out in sections 2 and 3. |
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| Additional copies | The Action Plan can be accessed from the Welsh Assembly Government website at www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills |
| Related documents | <i>One Wales: A progressive agenda for the government of Wales</i> <i>The Learning Country: Vision into Action</i> <i>Skills that Work for Wales: A Skills and Employment Strategy and Action Plan</i> <i>World Class Wales: Transforming Learning for Success in a Globalised World</i> |

Contents

| | |
|---|----------|
| 1. Introduction | 4 |
| 2. Modern foreign languages in secondary schools | 5 |
| 3. Modern foreign languages in Learning Pathways 14–19 | 7 |
| 4. References and background materials | 9 |

1. Introduction

1.1 Learning a language is a skill for life. Across all settings, languages contribute to learners' awareness of themselves as part of a global society and promote understanding of others. In the world of work, knowledge of languages helps economic growth and business competitiveness through improved understanding of the business environment and intercultural understanding.

1.2 As a bilingual nation, we start from a positive position because we provide education through the medium of English and Welsh. Both languages are embedded in our education and training system. Our young people therefore have a head start by developing language and literacy skills that they can readily apply to other European and world languages. Conversely, the study of a foreign language can support learners' literacy in English and Welsh.

1.3 Currently, a modern foreign language is compulsory for all 11–14 year olds. All students of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification develop new or refresh existing language skills. In addition, many learners as part of their Learning Pathways 14–19 choose to study for language qualifications and the numbers studying foreign languages in the higher education sector have steadily increased.

1.4 *Languages Count*, the national strategy for modern foreign languages in Wales, published in April 2002, set out our agenda to improve standards and opportunities for language learning. We have reviewed the progress made and identified how to build on strengths and address areas for improvement.

1.5 Our approach is based on partnership at all levels and focuses on how best to support schools so that we can continue to improve the learning and teaching of modern foreign languages in the first three years of secondary education. We will also increase the opportunities for 14–19-year-olds to study a foreign language, working in partnership with schools, colleges, employers and higher education institutions.

1.6 This Action Plan is therefore directed to practitioners in 11–19 learning settings, including schools, colleges and local authorities. In particular, it sets out how, in partnership with CILT Cymru, the National Centre for Languages we will work with stakeholders across Wales to continue to develop and promote the learning of modern foreign languages.

2. Modern foreign languages in secondary schools

2.1 Pupils' experience of learning a modern foreign language in Key Stage 3 is crucial. *Languages Count* identified the need to improve the quality of provision in the first three years of secondary education. As part of the last revision of the school curriculum and assessment arrangements, we therefore took steps to improve the learning and teaching of foreign languages at Key Stage 3. The revised national curriculum programme of study was introduced from September 2008. It has a strong skills-based approach and focuses on developing pupils' language skills and intercultural understanding, through a range of engaging and motivating activities. There are clear links to the non-statutory *Skills Framework for 3 to 19-year-olds in Wales*, as well as learning across the curriculum.

2.2 We also asked Estyn to produce advice for schools on good practice in the planning and delivery of modern foreign languages. Published in July 2009, the Inspectorate's report draws on inspection evidence and the new curriculum requirements. It provides information on factors affecting achievement and pupil numbers in Key Stage 4. It recognises that encouraging pupils to continue their study of a language remains a challenge. The report underlines the value of ongoing support and advice provided by local authorities and others in improving the quality of provision and standards. It also advocates better promotion of languages to pupils and parents and development of links with English and Welsh departments to improve pupils' language skills.

2.3 We want to build on this, both to raise attainment and to encourage more young people to continue learning a language beyond the age of 14. A wide range of innovative approaches have been developed by teachers, often with the support of CILT Cymru and other partners. In addition, many primary schools now offer pupils an opportunity to learn a foreign language. We want to promote further improvement and innovation so that the Key Stage 3 experience in secondary schools is motivating, challenging and encourages pupils to continue with their study of a modern foreign language.

We will therefore work with CILT Cymru to:

- **provide a rolling programme of advice, support and professional development for secondary schools in the delivery of modern foreign languages. In partnership with local authority consortia, CILT Cymru will support practitioners in implementing the good practice identified by Estyn and will encourage innovation and partnership working in improving the quality of learning. An initial programme will be implemented from September 2010**
- **extend the range of foreign languages provided for learners, with an emphasis on improving opportunities for the learning of world languages, including Spanish and Mandarin. This will include partnership with the higher education institutions in Cardiff and Lampeter to pilot the provision of Mandarin in schools in the 2010–11 academic year**
- **recognise and develop the knowledge and skills in home and community languages held by many learners. Classroom guidance and case studies on good practice to be provided for schools by April 2011**
- **work with schools so that the learning of a foreign language complements the wider development of literacy skills in English and Welsh. Classroom guidance on effective approaches to Triple Literacy to be published in partnership with the Welsh Assembly Government by September 2011**

- **continue to support primary schools already providing a foreign language to improve the quality of provision and secure effective transition for pupils moving into secondary education so that there is continuity and progression in learning**
- **work in partnership with the British Council to encourage schools to develop international links that can be used to enhance learning. We will also work with the Council to recognise and celebrate excellence and innovation in the learning of a foreign language.**

3. Modern foreign languages in Learning Pathways 14–19

3.1 The CBI Education and Skills Survey in 2008 confirmed that across the UK, employers recognise the contribution made by foreign language skills to profitability and extending business opportunities. The survey concluded that on a UK basis, 75 per cent of firms value conversational ability, with 25 per cent requiring full fluency. In addition, almost half of employers are currently recruiting some people specifically for their foreign language skills. It is important, therefore, that all 14–19 learners are aware of the value of foreign language skills and how they can improve their employability in an increasingly global society.

3.2 A modern foreign language has therefore been included within one of the five specified domains of learning to be made available to all students in the local curriculum underpinning Learning Pathways 14–19 across Wales.

3.3 We believe that all young people should have access to study a modern foreign language within their chosen Learning Pathway 14–19. Whilst GCSE and GCE A level are appropriate for many learners, they are not always the most suitable option for all. The challenge, therefore, is to provide a range of flexible learning options that are relevant to the needs of young people and encourage more students to include foreign languages as one element of their learning.

We will therefore work with CILT Cymru to:

- **pilot and promote, in partnership with 14–19 networks, a range of opportunities for the learning of foreign languages, with suitable accreditation, at a number of levels. The aim will be to extend choice and provide a flexible approach to language learning as one element of individual Learning Pathways. Initial work to run from September 2010**
- **work with stakeholders to develop foreign language units that can be delivered through the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification language module. Proposals for development work with awarding bodies to be agreed by April 2011**
- **develop in partnership with Careers Wales a menu of opportunities linking schools with employers so that learners can practise language skills in the workplace. Plans for further development of the Business Language Champions programme to be agreed by March 2011**
- **work with ColegauCymru/CollegesWales and learning providers to make best use of opportunities presented by the European Community's Lifelong Learning Programme for students to take up work experience placements in Europe**
- **support the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales in implementation of the *Routes into Languages Cymru* programme. The initiative aims to increase the number of people studying foreign languages in Wales.**

3.4 In terms of implementation and monitoring, we will work with CILT Cymru, the National Centre for Languages, to agree an annual work programme to address the action set out in this Plan. We will also ask CILT Cymru to work closely with key stakeholders in the development and delivery of its work programme. Progress will be monitored through regular reviews led by the Welsh Assembly Government of achievements against each of the action points identified in this Plan. The reviews will be used to both inform further work and wider developments, including the next review of the school curriculum.

4. References and background materials

Aiming for Excellence in Modern Foreign Languages (Estyn, 2002)

Asset Languages. Asset Languages is the assessment scheme for the Department for Children, Schools and Families' Languages Ladder and is being developed by Cambridge Assessment through OCR and Cambridge ESOL
www.assetlanguages.org.uk

Crossing Bridges: Using languages to support transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 (ACCAC, 2005)

ELAN: Effects on the European Union economy of shortages of foreign language skills in enterprise (European Commission, 2007)

Evaluation of the Key Stage 2 Modern Foreign Language pilot projects in Wales, 2003–06 (Welsh Assembly Government, 2007)

Evaluation of Phase 2 of the Key Stage 2 Modern Foreign Language pilot projects in Wales, 2007–09 (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010)

Figures of Speech: The 2007 NIACE survey on languages – Yanina Dutton and Sue Meyer (NIACE, 2007)

Getting Started: Guidance to support the introduction of Modern Foreign Languages in Key Stage 2 (CILT Cymru, 2008)

Improving modern foreign languages in secondary schools in Wales: Advice and good practice for schools and local authorities (Estyn report, July 2009)

Languages Count: The Welsh Assembly Government's National Modern Foreign Languages Strategy (Welsh Assembly Government, 2002)

Language Trends: Community language learning in England, Scotland and Wales (CILT Annual Survey, 2005)

The Learning Country: Vision into Action (Welsh Assembly Government, 2006)

Making Languages Count: Inspiring success and raising take-up in MFL through the CILT Cymru Compact scheme (CILT Cymru, 2008)

Making Languages Count: A national modern foreign languages strategy (Welsh Assembly Government consultation document, 2009)

Making the Link: Language Learning 5–14 (ACCAC, 2003)

Modern foreign languages in the National Curriculum for Wales (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008)

Multilingualism: An asset for Europe and a shared commitment (European Commission Communication, 2008)

Positively Plurilingual: The contribution of community languages to UK education and society (CILT, 2006)

School Effectiveness Framework: Building effective learning communities together (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008)

Seven hundred reasons for studying languages (Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistic and Area Studies, University of Southampton)

Skills that Work for Wales: A Skills and Employment Strategy and Action Plan (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008)

Strategic Review of Modern Foreign Language Provision in HEFCW-funded Higher Education Institutions (HEFCW, 2005)

Taking Stock: CBI Education and Skills Survey (CBI, 2008)

World Class Wales: Transforming Learning for Success in a Globalised World (Welsh Assembly Government, 2009)