

Language Learning at Key Stage 3

The impact of the Key Stage 3 Modern Foreign
Language Framework and Changes to the
Curriculum on Provision and Practice

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The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

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Executive Summary

Introduction

In 2006 the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) commissioned Cambridge University to conduct a two year study to investigate provision and practice in language learning at Key Stage 3 (KS3) in order to understand the impact of the Key Stage 3 Framework for Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) and other recent initiatives. The study focused on maintained schools in England.

Key Findings

- The KS3 Framework for Languages has supported and influenced KS3 teaching and learning, with heads of languages departments in the surveys and case study interviews expressing approval for aspects such as explicit learning objectives and explicit teaching of grammar. There was evidence of the Framework being largely embedded in languages teachers' pedagogical thinking and teachers reported a marked impact on pupils' understanding of the structure of the foreign language (e.g. sentence and text building, grammar), their skills development and their independence as learners as a result of its implementation.
- Specialist Language Colleges (SLCs) in both survey and case study data reported strong positive impact from the gaining of specialist status. This impact was felt mainly in terms of increased outreach work with feeder primary schools and in improved resourcing (including Information and Communication Technology (ICT)). The impact of specialist status was less felt at the level of classroom teaching and learning.
- There was almost universal approval from headteachers, heads of department, teachers and pupils of the principle of teaching languages in primary schools. In practice, the impact of the primary initiative on the secondary curriculum was weak, with languages departments still generally unclear as to how to meet the challenges of the Year 7 mixed experience classes and ensure good progression on the language work done in the primary school. There was some evidence in the second year of case study interviews that secondary teachers were more open to learning from the primary approach to language teaching than they were in the first year.
- The impact of the work of Specialist Language Colleges on that of other secondary schools more generally was low. Just under half of the schools in both years of the survey had no contact with an SLC, and those that did have contact mainly reported it to be only a little. This finding contrasts with the fact that many heads of department in non-SLCs viewed supporting languages in other schools as the main role of the SLC.
- Nearly half of the heads of department in the survey reported some negative effects of the optional status of languages at KS4 on teaching and learning at KS3. The majority of comments related to pupils' attitudes and earlier disaffection in KS3. Schools reported attempting to offset this and to encourage uptake beyond KS3 by making language learning as enjoyable an experience as possible, which corresponded well with pupil comments that they mainly chose whether or not to continue with the subject based on enjoyment of lessons.

- Heads of department identified resourcing (in particular ICT), good staffing levels and training as key factors that supported effective practice in KS3. Factors that were seen to constrain effective teaching were lack of time allocation to languages, poor timetabling, and class size.

Background and research questions

Recent years have seen major policy changes in the field of language learning in secondary schools in England. In 2002 the Languages Strategy set out the government's vision for languages, with three main objectives: to improve the teaching and learning of languages in schools (including an entitlement to languages for all pupils in KS2); to introduce a recognition system (now known as 'The Languages Ladder'); and to increase the number of people studying languages beyond school.

In order to improve teaching and learning in KS3, and forming the principal component within the Foundation Subjects strand of the KS3 National Strategy, the *Framework for teaching modern foreign languages: Years 7, 8 and 9* was introduced in 2003. With the same purpose as other frameworks written for primary and Key Stage 3 teachers, the KS3 Framework for languages contains a structured and progressive set of teaching objectives for modern foreign languages, together with guidance on how to use them.

At around the same time in 2003, MFL was removed from the core curriculum at KS4 in England, as part of a government reform of curriculum and qualifications.

The research questions which guided the investigation were the following:

- What is the extent and influence of the use of the KS3 Framework for MFL?
- What is the impact of Key Stage 2 (KS2) language learning initiatives on the KS3 curriculum?
- What is the impact of Specialist Languages Colleges on KS3 curriculum and teaching?
- How can language learning at KS3 best encourage uptake of languages at KS4?
- What are the drivers for, and challenges to, higher standards in KS3 language learning?

Methodology

This was a longitudinal study involving a mixed mode research design.

Quantitative strand

A questionnaire survey was administered twice (autumn 2006 and autumn 2007) to heads of languages departments in a random sample of 1600 maintained secondary schools in England. The sample was stratified according to geographical region and school type. The response rate for the first survey was 38 per cent (N=612), and 64 per cent for the second survey (N=389), which was completed by respondents to the first survey. The surveys elicited factual and evaluative data. While there was some repetition of questions across the two surveys in order to track change over the year, the second survey introduced new questions to develop further lines of enquiry that were raised in the first survey.

Qualitative strand

Qualitative data were gathered from in-depth case studies at 16 schools in England, each visited twice (2007 and 2008). These schools were chosen from the 276 respondents to the first survey who indicated they would be willing to be involved in the case study sample. The final 16 schools were chosen to achieve as representative a sample as possible in terms of geographical location and school type, while allowing schools of particular interest to the research to be included. During both rounds of case study visits lessons were observed and individual interviews were conducted with: the headteacher (30 interviews in total); the head of department (33 interviews); classroom teachers (40 interviews); and pupils (92 individual and 16 focus group interviews with Year 8 pupils in the first round, and 81 individual interviews and 16 focus group interviews with the same pupils then in Year 9 in the second round).

Findings

What is the extent and influence of the KS3 Framework for Languages?

The surveys and case study interviews suggested that most of the heads of department strongly approved of the KS3 Framework for languages, with 75 per cent of heads of department reporting that the Framework was having a positive impact on teaching and learning at KS3, and 71 per cent listing the Framework as a 'supporting factor' in KS3 teaching and learning. This support for the Framework was based mainly on its conformity with teachers' prior beliefs and approaches to language teaching. In both rounds of case study interviews, this was expressed as approval of a return to explicit teaching and learning, in the sense of explicit learning objectives and an explicit focus on grammar. In addition, 75 per cent of heads of department in the second survey reported a positive impact of the Framework on pupil learning.

There was evidence from both rounds of the case study interviews with heads of department and teachers that the Framework was largely embedded in their pedagogical thinking. This embedding was evident in departmental familiarity with the content of the Framework (shown both in the survey and the case study evidence). In the second round of the case studies the majority of teachers and heads of department responding to the question: 'If the KS3 Framework had not existed, would you still be where you are with languages teaching?' indicated that the Framework had been influential in a positive way on the quality of their teaching. The most frequently used phrase to explain the influence was 'it makes it [teaching] more structured'. Almost all the teachers who thought that the quality of their work was unaffected by the Framework said this was because the Framework advocated an approach that they already believed in and adopted.

Pupil interviews in the first round of the case studies revealed an understanding of the objectives and of the structure of lessons. The purpose of learning grammar and grammatical concepts had been made explicit to them. Pupils were also able to use grammatical terminology to discuss their learning. There were frequent references made to the progression from word level work to more complex work on building sentences and even texts, indicating that the KS3 Framework was having an impact on pupils' awareness of the processes involved in learning how to extend their target language output.

There was an increased focus in the second round of case study visits on the development of pupils' independent learning, which was usually framed by the teachers interviewed as the development of pupils' thinking skills. This was achieved through a pedagogy that encouraged greater independent manipulation of the foreign language.

The most frequently mentioned way in which the Framework (and National Strategies in general) had impacted on language teaching was the practice of Assessment for Learning (AfL), in particular target-setting and peer assessment. There seems to have been an increased focus in this area between the two case study visits. This focus on AfL was reflected in the pupil data; the majority of pupils in both rounds of case study visits reported knowing what they needed to do to get better at language learning for example: revising; making more varied and complex sentences, and using more tenses; practising listening skills.

While in both rounds of the case studies, nearly all pupils reported that their teachers used the target language frequently in their lessons, the interviews with teachers and heads of department suggested that one of the consequences of the increased focus on explicit teaching of grammar had been a reduction of the amount of teacher use of target language, with the risk of an overall reduction of pupil exposure to communicative target language input. The majority of the case study heads of department, including those in Specialist Language Colleges, reported a decrease in target language use.

The survey revealed that the Framework has not had as great an influence on the teaching of culture, with only 12 per cent of respondents saying that it had affected their practice significantly. This was confirmed in both rounds of case study interviews with heads of department who nevertheless believed that cultural objectives *should* be integrated in KS3 teaching.

What is the impact of KS2 language learning initiatives on the KS3 curriculum?

Most headteachers, heads of department, teachers and pupils in the case study schools approved of the principle of teaching languages in primary schools. Schools which had the greatest liaison with feeder primaries over language provision were most positive about its value.

However, the perception of the majority of secondary teachers and headteachers was that there was a lack of consistency at present in foreign language provision in primary schools. This inconsistency was felt in terms of amount of language teaching taking place, the language being taught and the ways in which it was taught. Concerns for secondary teachers were primarily to do with the challenges of ensuring progression in Year 7 groups where there was such a wide degree of mixed experience.

Involvement of secondary languages departments with the primary languages initiative was not widespread. The data from the second survey and the second round of case studies suggested a growing awareness as to what was happening in the feeder primaries and of how the two sectors might begin to work together. In the first round of case study interviews, heads of languages and teachers mainly referred to the lack of language teaching expertise among primary colleagues and stressed the role of secondary languages teachers in providing support. In the second round, however, the secondary teachers were more likely to talk about opportunities for both sectors to learn from each other, especially in terms of their own learning from primary methodology.

Despite evidence of some increased collaboration, findings from both surveys suggested that the level of impact of KS2 language learning on the Year 7 languages curriculum remained low. Where impact of the KS2 initiative on Year 7 was reported, the area most commonly identified was that of pupils' level of vocabulary, increased confidence, and motivation to learn a foreign language at Year 7. Teachers voiced strong concerns about managing progression, however. Schools in the main were not drawing on pupils' prior experience or

attainment, and there was little evidence from the qualitative data that the methodology of KS3 teaching was being affected by the introduction of language teaching in primary schools.

Headteachers and heads of department were generally unclear at interview about the direction in which their planning of KS2/3 language provision would proceed, though had better formulated ideas by the second survey. Heads of languages who already had a good level of experience of working with primaries identified more specific areas for development than those who had less experience including revising schemes of work, ensuring progression through using the Languages Ladder and KS2 Framework in primaries, and running language summer schools.

Nearly half of the pupils interviewed in the first round of the case studies said they had had some experience of languages at primary level. They held mixed views on the impact of their own experience at KS2 on their learning at KS3.

What is the impact of Specialist Languages Colleges (SLCs) on KS3 curriculum and teaching?

Heads of department in SLCs reported that the gaining of specialist status had a strong positive impact on the development of the languages departments at these schools. Half of the SLCs responding to the first survey stated that the impact was very strong and over a third said it was quite strong, and this was similar in the second survey. The longer the duration of SLC status, the stronger the reported impact.

The most commonly reported areas of strong impact in the second survey were in: liaison with KS2 (68 per cent); the use of ICT (61 per cent); provision of resources more generally (60 per cent); uptake at KS4 (54 per cent); and diversity of languages offered at the school (53 per cent). At classroom level there was much less perceived impact on pedagogy. Improved links with industry were not noted.

There appeared to be a relatively low level of impact of the work of Specialist Language Colleges on that of other secondary schools more generally. Just under half of the non-SLC schools in both years of the survey had had no contact with an SLC, and those that did have contact reported it mainly to be only a little. The most commonly reported reasons for absence of contact were: lack of communication, geographical distance, or doubts over usefulness of the contact. In the second survey, of those heads of department who had had contact with an SLC in the intervening year, 39 per cent (n=76) reported it to have had no impact on their department and 46 per cent (n=90) reported only a little impact.

In the survey, heads of department in both SLCs and non-SLCs were in agreement that the role of SLCs was: to promote the status of languages in school and beyond (94 per cent); to develop innovative teaching (90 per cent); to support other secondary schools in the area (85 per cent); to support provision of languages in primary schools (85 per cent); to support modern foreign languages teaching nationally (75 per cent); to be involved in the training of languages teachers (67 per cent). In an open question about the role for SLCs in the future, 95 per cent of respondent heads of department from non-SLCs referred to the desirability of SLCs providing support for other schools. In contrast, only about half of the heads of department of SLCs who responded to this question said that their role included supporting other secondary schools.

How can language learning at KS3 best encourage uptake at KS4?

KS4 languages uptake in the sample

Both surveys suggested languages were optional for all pupils in approximately two thirds of schools. Where schools operated a selective policy for compulsory language learning, it was usually applied exclusively to pupils in higher sets. However, the first survey suggested that there was little support (18 per cent of heads of department) for compulsory languages for *all* beyond KS3, a view confirmed by the case study interviews, but almost half of the survey respondents felt that it should be compulsory for *most* pupils. In the first round of case study interviews, reasons given by headteachers for making languages optional (which was the case in 12 of the 16 case study schools) were to do with offering choice, the belief that learners should enjoy what they were studying, the historically poor delivery of languages and poor pupil motivation.

46 per cent of heads of department in the survey reported some negative effects of the optional status of languages at KS4 on teaching and learning at KS3. The majority of comments related to pupils' attitudes, with 45 per cent of respondent heads of department noting earlier disaffection in KS3. Some case study schools were trying to offset this effect by introducing exam-oriented languages courses in Year 9, through fast-tracking or similar strategies.

Common strategies to encourage uptake

In the survey heads of department said they encouraged uptake by doing presentations and talks, including inviting external speakers (46 per cent), planning trips and visits in the UK and abroad (35 per cent), and by using promotional materials. One third said the main way they sought to encourage uptake was by teaching good lessons at KS3 and making the learning experience as interesting and enjoyable as possible for pupils. Enrichment activities such as languages events, theatre visits and languages clubs were mentioned by 21 per cent of respondents. Guidance at GCSE choice time, including the targeting of individual pupils and involving parents in the decision-making process via letters home, was mentioned by 16 per cent. Offering a variety of courses at KS4 was seen by 9 per cent of respondents as likely to promote the study of languages beyond KS3. However, figures for a question asking which courses were on offer in respondents' schools show that in fact the overwhelming majority offered just GCSE (81 per cent) at KS4.

It was clear from the case studies that departments were putting a lot of effort into promoting uptake in KS4. As well as some of the strategies used above some heads of department reported at interview that they used the following ways of encouraging pupils to continue with their studies beyond KS3: identifying and then 'nurturing' individual pupils whom they thought might enjoy and be good at languages; writing to parents; and using peer encouragement by having KS4 pupils talk to younger learners.

In the survey heads of department rated the benefits of language learning for pupils primarily in terms of personal and social gains, yet over three quarters of respondents said that in their discussions to promote languages with KS3 pupils their primary emphasis was on improved vocational prospects, suggesting a discrepancy between what they perceived as the true benefits and the arguments they put forward in discussions.

The pupils' views

The most frequently cited reasons given by the case study Year 8 pupils for and against continuing with language study related to the extent of their enjoyment of language lessons. Another common factor in the individual interviews was how highly they rated themselves as language learners and how good a grade they were likely to get at GCSE. On the other hand in the focus group interviews, slightly greater prominence was given to vocational reasons for uptake.

What are the drivers for, and challenges to, higher standards in KS3 language learning?

Organisational factors, such as timetabling and resourcing, were named overwhelmingly by heads of department in both surveys as most likely to either constrain or support effective teaching. The following were felt to support effective teaching: teaching resources and in particular good ICT provision (73 per cent of respondents), staffing (59 per cent), training (53 per cent), and the use of Foreign Language Assistants (FLAs) (55 per cent). Factors that were seen to constrain effective teaching were lack of time allocation to languages (46 per cent), timetabling (54 per cent), and class size (45 per cent). Headteachers focused primarily on the quality of their languages staff as the key to the standard of language learning in their school.

The case study data indicated that collaboration with other teachers outside the school, for instance working with feeder primaries or in Strategic Learning Networks (SLNs), could provide a stimulus for innovation in teaching. However, involvement in SLNs was not necessarily seen by all heads of department as productive. The second survey indicated that of the 56 per cent of heads of department who said they were part of an SLN, only 38 per cent said this had had some impact on language provision at KS3 and 61 per cent said there had been no impact.

Collaboration within school was also raised as positively impacting on KS3 work. Several of the case study teachers had enjoyed the experience of working collaboratively with other departments in their school, for example on a 'Eurovision Song Contest' with music where pupils wrote and performed songs in the target language and teaching the history of the First World War in French. Several teachers reported wanting to develop more of a context for their study of the foreign language and to teach in a way that allowed for the discussion to be on a more 'adult footing' which such forms of collaboration might allow.

There was evidence of increasing use of ICT over time in the case studies. More teachers reported that they were becoming more confident in using PowerPoint presentations and language learning websites in their teaching and some were beginning to use Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) to support learning. There was also evidence that teachers who were already using ICT to a significant extent were thinking about how to use it creatively and in ways which most appropriately support language learning *e.g.* podcasting, using digital video camera to support AfL in speaking work. There was evidence from interviews with pupils in both rounds that they were likely to view this as supporting their learning. Use of ICT, therefore, was largely felt by teachers and pupils to be a key driver for improving quality of language teaching and learning.

When asked at interview in the case studies to identify drivers for change, teachers and heads of department referred to the following factors: the commitment and motivation of departmental staff; the presence of Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) and trainee teachers; being aware of the current educational developments; the status of languages in the school and the role of language learning in strengthening intercultural understanding; a focus on learning rather than teaching; involvement in In-Service training (INSET).

It was clear from both rounds of case study interviews that a key driver for pupils was interactivity in the languages classroom. Pupils tended to name the *same* activities, when asked both what they enjoyed and what they felt was most beneficial for their learning. These were activities where they were able to interact with each other or the teacher, such as games, role plays, group work, and using the interactive whiteboard. Interactivity was also raised as a main factor in pupil perception of the relative difficulty of languages as compared to other curricular areas. Pupils who thought languages were easier in relation to other curricular subjects commented in particular on the way they were taught (i.e. interactively), including mention of the frequency of speaking activities.

1. Introduction and Background

The last few years have seen the introduction of major structural policy initiatives in response to national reviews, enquiries and reports from stakeholders that have commented on the state of foreign language learning in schools in England and outlined recommendations for improvement in provision.

In 2000 the Nuffield Languages Inquiry (2000) chaired by Sir Trevor McDonald and Sir John Boyd, published its final report in which it made a far-reaching list of recommendations under the following main headings:

1. Develop a national strategy for languages as a key skill
2. Appoint a languages supremo
3. Raise the profile of languages in the UK
4. Establish business-education partnerships
5. Provide school children with a sound basis for language learning for life
6. Invest in an early start
7. Raise the quality of the provision for languages in secondary schools
8. Ensure wider participation beyond school
9. Promote languages for the majority of 16-19 year-olds
10. Develop a strategic approach to languages in higher education
11. Develop the huge potential of lifelong language learning
12. Intensify the drive to recruit more language teachers
13. Exploit new technologies to the full
14. Ensure policy is reliably and consistently informed
15. Establish a national standards framework for languages

The government subsequently implemented several of the more concrete recommendations in the context of schools in England (such as the appointment of a National Director for Languages, investment in the primary languages initiative, and the introduction of the Languages Ladder as a framework for assessment). In addition, in 2002 the government set out its vision for languages education in a Languages Strategy that sought to address three main objectives: to improve the teaching and learning of languages in schools (including an entitlement to languages for all pupils in KS2); to introduce a national recognition system (known as the Languages Ladder); and to increase the number of people studying languages beyond school.

As far as provision in schools is concerned, the Strategy outlined three main areas of policy focus. Firstly, the Strategy turned to the primary sector as the springboard for the transformation of the quality of language teaching and learning in the years ahead:

Transforming language competence in this country means first of all transforming language learning in schools - we depend on embedding language learning in primary schools to make our strategy work and then ensuring that opportunity to learn languages has a key place in the transformed secondary school of the future. (DfES, 2002: 7)

In addition to this longer term strategy of transforming language learning in schools from the primary upwards, improvement in the secondary sector was more immediately tackled through the introduction of a Framework for teaching languages at Key Stage 3, for which extra training and support was to be provided to languages teachers working with 11-14 year-olds. This was in order to 'sharpen their skills and develop their understanding of the language learning process and its place within the overall learning experience' (Ibid, p.23). Since then the government has confirmed the decision to require all primary schools in England to offer a foreign language by 2011. In 2006, at the start of this research study, there was evidence that 70 per cent of primary schools were providing languages within class time (Lines et al., 2007)

The Strategy also announced the planned increase in the number of Specialist Language Colleges and stressed that the role of these schools was to develop outreach work with primary schools, to share good practice and to provide professional development for both primary and secondary teachers (Ibid, p.24).

Finally, with regard to KS4 language learning, the Strategy document confirmed the government's decision to lift, as of September 2004, the statutory requirement that schools were obliged to teach a foreign language to all pupils to the age of 16. The immediate consequences of this decision has been the sharp decline of the proportion of all pupils in this country studying a foreign language, from 68 per cent in 2004 to 44 per cent in 2008 (CILT, 2008).

Since the publication of the Languages Strategy, there has been much public debate about the state of language teaching in schools and the relative effectiveness of the policy measures. The government asked Lord Dearing and Dr King to conduct a Languages Review in 2006 based on consultation with stakeholders. In their final report, the authors conclude that a return to mandatory languages requirement at KS4 should not be implemented for the time being, pending the outcome of other measures taken to promote language teaching in schools in this country.

During this interim period (2004-2011), prior to the introduction of statutory provision of foreign languages at KS2 and following the lifting of compulsory status of the study of foreign languages at KS4, the three years of language learning at KS3 may constitute for most children in England the only period of foreign language study in school. Large-scale national research has so far focused exclusively on developments in provision and learning at KS2 or KS4. No systematic study has been carried out that focuses on teachers' and pupils' response to the educational context in which they are working. It is against this background that the current study commissioned to assess the impact of the introduction of the KS3 Framework, has been designed.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This section contains an outline of the main components of the research design and includes a profile of the survey and case study samples.

This was a longitudinal study involving a mixed mode research design consisting of a questionnaire survey administered twice with a year's interval, and qualitative case studies at 16 schools in England, each visited twice during the period. Both questionnaires were piloted in 10 secondary schools and all case study instruments were piloted in one school that did not participate in the main study. The research team also incorporated advice on the questionnaires and interview schedules from members of a project advisory panel and from the DCSF steering committee.

2.2 Literature Review

The study was informed by a literature review that was carried out at the outset of the study and updated during the two years of the study's progress. The main purpose of the review was to inform the focus of the collection and analysis of data relevant to the research questions. A secondary purpose was to provide an analytical account of the background literature which contributed to the literature review chapter in the final report.

Criteria that guided the review

In addition to the focus on the different topics identified in the 5 research questions, further criteria which informed the selection of studies consulted were as follows:

Studies based on maintained schools in England: Whilst some references to research conducted in overseas settings or in other parts of the UK were included in the review, the national focus of the study required an England-specific summary of prior findings in the first instance.

Recent studies and reports: Though there was no specific cut-off point to the publication dates of studies consulted, the contemporary focus of the study required an emphasis on recent (mostly since 2000) research.

Procedures

The search began through the use of educational research databases (e.g. ERIC, BEI and CERUK). A number of existing literature reviews on related themes were also consulted, such as the Modern Languages Review Group: EPPI 2004a & b, 2005; Hunt et al. 2005; and McCrone et al. 2005. MFL studies and surveys, conducted by national institutions such as DfES/DCSF, TDA, QCA, NFER, CILT, as well as annual reports on MFL from Ofsted were also consulted. These reports provided insights into the effectiveness of policy-making mostly on the basis of evidence of implementation in schools. The review also drew on the educational research literature reporting on independent studies in relevant areas of foreign language teaching and learning.

2.3 Quantitative data: surveys 1 and 2

- Questionnaire

The final version of survey 1 (see appendix B) was administered during the Autumn term, 2006, and comprised an eight page document consisting of 51 questions in a range of closed and open formats. The questions also varied in terms of focus on factual information or on evaluative information. Factual information related to departmental staffing, languages taught, systems of choice of language, length of compulsory MFL study, use of resources, links with other schools and with community, KS2/3 transition, approaches to teaching and assessment, use of KS3 Framework in MFL, and courses and uptake at KS4 and Sixth Form. The questionnaire also elicited evaluative information in the form of perception of the value and impact of language colleges, of different aspects of the KS3 MFL framework, of the current and potential impact of the KS2 initiative, of key factors for raising standards in MFL learning at the school, and of wider changes affecting language teaching.

The aim of the second questionnaire (administered in autumn 2007) was to gather information on the current state of provision in the schools as well as to track change since the first year of the survey. The questionnaires were therefore sent out to the 612 respondents to survey 1. The second questionnaire (see Appendix B) was ten pages long and included 40 questions in a range of closed and open formats, some of which were designed specifically to track change from survey 1 and some of which were designed to follow up key questions raised by responses to survey 1.

- Sample and response rates

The aim was to base final report findings on returns from 10 per cent of schools in England with KS3 (achieved sample). There were 3,409 maintained secondary schools in England (www.eurydice.org accessed 2006). The target sample was therefore 340 schools for the second survey. In order to ensure sufficient completed questionnaires in the second year of the project, 1600 questionnaires were sent out representing approximately half of the total of maintained secondary schools in England (issued sample).

The sample of schools was drawn up through a random sampling procedure (provided by the National Foundation for Educational Research sampling service). The sample was stratified according to geographical region and school type (and reflects the national ratio of language specialist to non-specialist maintained schools i.e. 1:15).

The total number of returns received for the first questionnaire was 612, representing a response rate of 38 per cent. Completed questionnaires were coded and data entered on SPSS. Relevant frequency and crosstabulation tables are presented in appendices at the end of the report.

The total number of returns received was 389, a response rate of 63.6 per cent for the second survey. Thus, the final achieved sample represented 11.4 per cent of secondary schools in England, and slightly exceeded the project target of 10 per cent. At times findings from the 'core sample' (i.e. the 389 respondents who completed both survey 1 and survey 2) are presented in order to track change within the same cohort.

2.4 Qualitative data: Case studies

2.4.1 Selection of schools

276 respondents to survey 1 indicated that they would be happy to participate as case study schools in the research; of those, 16 were selected.

The overall aim in selecting the case study schools was to achieve as representative a sample as possible in terms of geographical location and school type while allowing schools of particular interest to the research to be included. Two main indicators, therefore, were taken into account:

- the location and characteristics of the school
- responses to key questions in Questionnaire 1.

In terms of location and characteristics of the school, the selection was made on the basis of geographical spread, character (urban/rural) and type of authority, as well as school level factors. These included school size, specialist status, languages taught, socio-economic indicators (for example, percentage of free school meals, ethnicity and pupils with English as an additional language), and attainment evidence. In order to achieve a geographical spread, respondents who were willing to participate further were plotted across the nine Government Office Regions, which were in turn grouped into North (North East: one school, North West: two, Yorkshire and the Humber: two), South (London: two, South East: two), East (East of England: two, East Midlands: two) and West (West Midlands: two, South West: one).

In addition to three language colleges, the sample of schools included schools with the following specialisms: Arts (three), Sports (three), Technology (two), Business and Enterprise (one), Maths and Computing (one), as well as three non-specialist schools. In addition to the 16 'first choice' schools, additional schools were selected across the regions in the event that first choice schools declined the research team's invitation to participate.

The selection was also partly made on the basis of questionnaire responses in order to include schools where primary languages were perceived to be having an impact on secondary provision, where the KS3 Framework was reported to be in active use and where schools were exploring alternative curricula for pupils with different needs.

2.4.2 Data collection and analysis

Heads of department in the identified schools were contacted initially by email and letter which described what their participation would entail. The invitation explained that the study would be conducted in two phases and that a researcher would visit each participating school for two or three days in spring 2007 and spring 2008. Each year the researcher would conduct:

- an interview with the headteacher (approximately 45 minutes)
- an interview with the head of department (approximately one hour)
- observation of one KS3 lesson of two teachers
- separate post-observation interviews with the two teachers (approximately 45 minutes each)
- one focus group interview with ten pupils: (in Year 8 in 2007, and with the same pupils in Year 9 in 2008) (approximately 30 minutes)
- six individual interviews with different pupils: (in Year 8 in 2007, and with the same pupils in Year 9 in 2008) (approximately ten minutes each).

The core of the qualitative study is the data collected in the interviews. All additional data gathered, such as school documentation, served the purpose of providing the research team with contextual information that helped to assimilate and evaluate the information elicited at interview. The main purpose of the lesson observations was to provide focused points of reference in the follow-up interviews with the respective teachers in order to explore their conceptions of language teaching and learning.

The following table indicates the total number of semi-structured interviews in each category and of lesson observations completed in this round of the case study part of the research:

Table 2.1: Case study data collected in schools

Type of data	2007	2008	Total
Interviews with headteachers (and one deputy headteacher)	15	15	30
Interviews with heads of department	16	17	33
Observations of KS3 French, German, or Spanish lessons	30	22	52
Interviews with teachers (whose lessons were observed)	26	14	40
Individual interviews with Year 8 pupils	92	81	173
Focus group interviews with Year 8 pupils (approximately eight in each group)	16	16	32

All interviews were recorded with the participants' permission and transcriptions were later produced for analysis. The analytical procedure adopted consisted of a mixture of deductive and inductive methodology. Three coding frameworks (one for the headteacher, one for heads of department and teachers, and one for pupil interview data), which were linked to the main research questions and areas of focus highlighted in the questionnaire, were constructed prior to the analysis of the transcripts (see appendix C). All transcripts were entered on to *NVivo* and appropriately coded. Emergent themes formed the basis of the interpretation of the qualitative data.

The findings from the surveys are presented using percentages where $N > 100$ and where $N < 100$ figures are used. At times where only a proportion of the sample responded to a particular item both N and the percentage is used.

2.5 Profile of survey 1 and survey 2 schools

Data provided by the then DfES enabled the profile of the survey 1 respondent schools to be broken down by Government Office Region, school type, percentage of pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) statements and percentage of pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL). In terms of region, responses were fairly evenly distributed, with the highest response rates from the North West/Merseyside and the South-East (14.5 per cent each) and the lowest from the North East (4.7 per cent). The majority of respondent schools were 11-18 or 11-16 comprehensives (47.5 per cent and 38.4 per cent respectively). In terms of SEN statemented pupils, over half the respondent schools had 1-2 per cent of pupils with statements, and nearly 40 per cent had 3 per cent or more. In terms of EAL, over half the respondent schools had 1-5 per cent of pupils with EAL, and 28 per cent had between 6 and

49 per cent. Full tables for each of these background variables are reproduced in the Appendix.

Table 2.2: Geographical balance within the achieved sample

	% of sample
Specialist languages college	7.9
Non-specialist college	19.1
Specialist college (not languages)	68.6
Dual/combined specialism languages	10.5

The schools' profile in this sample largely mirrored national figures. There were 45 single specialist language colleges in the sample, representing 7.4 per cent or 1:12 of the total sample. This can be compared with the 1:15 ratio of language colleges to other categories in the country as a whole (www.standards.dfes.gov.uk accessed 2006). In addition there was a smaller number of dual and combined specialist colleges in the cohort where languages were a specialism alongside other subjects (4.6 per cent). In sum, out of the total of 612 respondent schools, 73 of the respondent schools were ones where language was either a single or a shared specialism. In July 2006 the national statistics revealed that there were 297 schools in England with either sole or partial language specialist status: that is, 1: 11 compared with 1:8 in this sample (DfES, *ibid*).

Within this group of language colleges, the sample showed a spread of duration of specialist status: 16 of the 73 schools (21.9 per cent) have had more than five years' experience and 21 schools (28.8 per cent) have had less than a year of language college status. This spread of duration of specialist status allows for examination of the impact of the status on the work of some schools over several years, as well as to examine the transitional effects on those schools which are at the start of the process.

The collective profile of the 389 schools that responded to the second survey was very similar to that of the 612 schools in the first survey in terms of distribution across Government Office Regions, school types, percentage of pupils with statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and percentage of pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL).

There was a slight increase in the number of schools with SLC status. Seven of the respondent 62 SLCs in Questionnaire 2 had gained SLC status since last year. 9.0 per cent of the schools reported single specialism SLC status (8.7 per cent in 2006) and 6.9 per cent reported having languages as a combined or second specialism (5.4 per cent in 2006).

2.6 Profile of the languages staff

Approximately half of the respondents in the 2006 survey had been head of the languages department at the school for more than five years, indicating a degree of stability in the staffing of this role. Only 12.9 per cent had been head of department at the school for less than a year. Furthermore 150 of the respondents (26.9 per cent) had worked as head of languages at their previous school, with about 50 per cent of these having had more than five years' experience as head of department at a previous school. As in 2006, the data for the 2007 survey suggested a degree of stability in the staffing of the head of department role as

40.8 per cent of the respondents had been in post for at least six years. 10.3 per cent of the respondents in survey 2 reported that they had taken on the role of head of department in the intervening 12 months.

The profile of departmental staffing within languages was less reassuring. In the 2006 survey 21.4 per cent of departments had fewer than three full-time members of staff. The most common number of staff was three (131 schools) or four (129 schools). The majority of schools had between 1 and 3 part-time teachers working in the languages department. Relatively few schools had advanced skills teachers (ASTs) working in the department (64 out of the 612).

In 2007 a significant change in the level of staffing in the MFL department was reported in 22.6 per cent of the schools. 4.7 per cent reported an increase while 17.6 per cent reported an overall fall in the number of languages teachers. SLC status appears to be a factor in the growth or decline of the number of languages teachers. There was an increase in the number of teachers in MFL departments in 13.6 per cent of SLCs compared with 3.1 per cent of schools without a languages specialism and a decrease in the number of languages teachers in 8.5 per cent of SLCs compared with 19.3 per cent of other schools. The reasons given for an increase in the number of teachers included: higher uptake at KS4 (three schools); the introduction of a second specialism in languages (one school); the introduction of an additional language (one school); and involvement in KS2 teaching. Explanations for a fall in the number of languages teachers included: lower uptake at KS4 (20 schools); a reduction in time allocated to languages at KS3 (two schools); and a reduction in the number of languages taught (two schools).

A valuable additional support for staffing in languages is available through the Foreign Language Assistants (FLAs) scheme. It would seem, however, that whilst 31.5 per cent of schools in 2006 had two or more FLAs working in their languages department, 48.2 per cent of schools had no FLAs at all. The evidence suggests that non-specialist schools are less likely to employ a FLA with 60.7 per cent of the non-specialist, mainstream schools in the sample not having a foreign language assistant, compared with 15 per cent of language specialist schools (single, dual and combined grouped together). Survey 1 suggested that FLAs are used more in supporting the needs of able linguists than those of lower attaining pupils.

There was a slight increase in the 2007 survey in number of schools employing Foreign Language Assistants (FLAs). 54.9 per cent of the schools reported employing at least one FLA in 2007 compared to 51.7 per cent of the same schools in 2006. 37.3 per cent of schools in 2007 had two or more FLAs working in the department compared to 31.5 per cent of the same schools in 2006.

Regionally, the areas which had the highest proportion of schools that reported having no FLAs in the surveys were the East Midlands, the North East, the North West, and the West Midlands (54.2 per cent). The regions with the highest percentage of schools reporting having one or more FLAs were London, Eastern region, and the South West.

2.7 Direct contact with the foreign country

Direct contact with the people of the target country is often cited as potentially a key motivational and learning experience for pupils. The questionnaire sought information in relation to the three most common modes of contact: electronic links, residential visits, and home-to-home visits.

Of these three modes, residential visits were the most common. Survey 1 revealed that 73.5 per cent of schools have organised trips abroad (beyond day visits) as part of the language learning experience. On the other hand, home-to-home visits were relatively infrequent with only 26.5 per cent of schools organising this. Similarly, only 24 per cent of schools had electronic links with schools in the target country. This may in part be due to the level of availability of electronic resources in the partner schools.

Analysing the responses by school status, it emerged that single language colleges are the most active in their use of electronic links, (48.9 per cent), and in organising residential visits (91.1 per cent) and home-to-home visits (55.6 per cent), whilst non-specialist schools and non-language specialist schools were the most inactive.

Survey 2 sought information regarding new forms of contact established with native speakers since the previous year. 32.4 per cent of the respondent heads of department (126 schools) reported that new forms of contact had been made. The most commonly mentioned include: links through the internet, email or letters (39 schools); partnerships with schools abroad (27 schools); new native speaker member of staff or trainee teacher (15 schools) exchange visits (13 schools); visits from native speakers (12 schools); and the employment of FLAs (10 schools). 7.0 per cent of respondent heads of department (27 schools) reported that a form of regular contact with native speakers had been dropped in the intervening year. The most frequently mentioned reasons include: ceasing to employ FLAs (nine schools); ending exchange visits (eight schools); and cutting email contact (three schools).

2.8 Foreign languages taught

Table 2.3: Schools teaching 1, 2 or 3 foreign languages at KS3 and KS4 in first survey (2006)

	In KS3 (N = 612)	In KS4 (N = 596)
No foreign language	0%	0.5%
One foreign language	13.6%	12.6%
Two foreign languages	53.1%	45.4%
Three foreign languages	26.1%	27.1%

As can be seen from Table 2.3, the majority of schools in the 2006 sample taught two foreign languages in KS3 and KS4. In KS3 non-specialist schools were more likely to teach only one language (39.8 per cent). 31 schools in the sample taught more than five foreign languages at KS4. The majority of these (54 per cent) were single specialist language colleges, one of whom reported teaching 14 languages including a range of Asian and oriental languages. Kruskal-Wallis tests indicate that in relation to both KS3 and KS4 there is a statistically significant difference in the number of foreign languages taught across the different types of school in the sample.

The most commonly taught language in 2006 in KS3 was French, with German and Spanish in second and third place respectively. Very few schools taught other languages at this level.

French was taught at KS3 in almost all schools which taught languages (99.5 per cent), German was taught in 62.9 per cent of schools and Spanish in 49.7 per cent. Very few schools taught other languages at this level. Latin was taught in 2.9 per cent of schools at KS3. A similar pattern was repeated at KS4: French (96.5 per cent), German (62.9 per cent), Spanish (54.4 per cent).

Table 2.4: Schools teaching 1, 2 or 3 foreign languages at KS3 and KS4 in second survey (2007)

	In KS3 N = 389	In KS4 N = 378
No foreign language	0%	1%
One foreign language	12.1%	10.3%
Two foreign languages	50.4%	43.7%
Three foreign languages	30.6%	30.1%

As can be seen for Table 2.4, the second survey showed that the most common number of languages taught in 2007 was two foreign languages in KS3 and KS4 as in 2006. Schools with SLC status were more likely to offer a wider range of languages in KS3 and KS4. 74.2 per cent of SLCs and 30.6 per cent of other schools offered at least three languages in KS3 while 80.6 per cent of SLCs and 36.1 per cent of other schools offered at least three languages in KS4. Schools without a languages specialism were more likely to teach only one language in KS3 (13.8 per cent compared with 3.2 per cent of SLCs) and in KS4 (12.3 per cent compared with 1.6 per cent). Four schools did not teach any foreign language at KS4.

Since the first questionnaire 8.7 per cent (34) of the heads of department reported an increase in the range of languages taught at KS3 (14.5 per cent of SLCs and 7.6 per cent of other schools). 8.0 per cent (31) of the heads of department reported an increase in the range of languages taught at KS4 (14.5 per cent of SLCs and 7.0 per cent of other schools). Spanish was the language most often introduced at KS3 (15 schools) and KS4 (18 schools) and German was the language most frequently discontinued at KS3 (seven schools) and KS4 (five schools). The main reasons given for introducing additional languages were the following: as an extracurricular or enrichment activity (ten schools); as a result of SLC status (seven schools); to increase pupil choice (seven schools); to make use of the FLA's language (five schools); and to promote uptake at KS4 (five schools). Very few heads of department reported a reduction in the number of languages offered at KS3 (1.8 per cent of SLCs and 2.1 per cent of other schools) or at KS4 (1.6 per cent of SLCs and 4.7 per cent of other schools). The reason most often cited for dropping a language was low uptake at KS4 (eight schools).

A crosstabulation of schools teaching three or more foreign languages by school specialism found that the highest proportion of schools teaching the highest number of FLs at KS3 and KS4 was, unsurprisingly, that of language colleges. The next highest types of schools in which this number of languages are taught at KS4 are combined specialism including languages, combined specialism not including languages, and Arts. Table 2.5 shows the

figures for all types of schools represented in the sample, excluding those from which questionnaire returns were below 20.

Table 2.5: Specialisms of schools teaching two or more FLs at KS3 and three or more FLs at KS4 in first survey

Specialism	2 or more FLs taught at KS3	3 or more FLs taught at KS4	Total no. of schools with this specialism in sample
Arts	39	28	67
Business & Enterprise	23	13	42
Science	22	15	49
Sport	23	11	46
Technology	48	26	84
Combined specialism (not MFL)	45	32	61
Combined specialism (with MFL)	19	23	29
Single specialism language college	33	40	44
Non-specialist school	84	29	117

A regional breakdown of the data reveals that the area with the highest percentage of schools teaching three or more foreign languages at KS4 were London (58.5 per cent), Yorkshire and North East (43.8 per cent), South West (42.6 per cent), South East (42 per cent), and Eastern region (35.4 per cent). With regard to the number of foreign languages taught at KS3 in a school: the lowest was East Midlands (25 per cent teaching only one foreign language) and the highest was London (46.2 per cent of schools teaching three or more languages), the South East (42 per cent), and the South West (36.8 per cent). Similar results were found in the second survey.

From a single sex school perspective, both surveys found that there was a difference in the number of languages taught in single sex and mixed schools. In girls' schools, the most common number of languages taught at KS3 was three and in boys' schools and mixed schools the most common number of languages taught at KS3 was two. At KS4, the most common number of languages taught in each type of school was two. Single sex schools more often offered three or more languages at KS3 and KS4 than mixed schools, with more girls' schools offering three or more languages than boys' schools, as shown in the table below:

Table 2.6: Number of single sex and mixed schools teaching three or more languages at KS3 and KS4 in second survey

	Girls' schools teaching three or more languages	Boys' schools teaching three or more languages	Mixed schools teaching three or more languages
KS3	23 62.2%	7 50%	113 34.9%
KS4	21 56.8%	7 50%	161 42.2%

3 Literature Review

3.1 Key findings

Impact of KS3 Framework for MFL

- QCA (2005) reported that the KS3 Framework, when implemented, seems to have a positive impact on KS3 teaching and learning especially in terms of grammar teaching, range and effectiveness of classroom activities, and a focus on skills rather than on topics.
- Ofsted (2004b) reported improvement in pupils' understanding of how language works and in confidence and accuracy in speaking. More recently, however, Ofsted (2008) reported that the level of speaking was good in less than a third of schools surveyed.
- The Framework seems to have had little impact on speaking for real purposes, reading for pleasure, writing at length and the development of cultural awareness.

Impact of KS2 initiative on KS3 languages

- In 2006 70 per cent of primary schools in England reported that they were teaching languages within class time (Lines et al. 2007). In 2007 a second survey suggested this had increased to 84 per cent of schools (Whitby et al. 2008).
- Findings from the literature indicate a limited impact so far on KS3 languages.
- Transition is identified as an issue. QCA (2004) reported that where primary and secondary language teachers co-operate well, there was good progression of language teaching and learning.
- There have been few reported cases of secondary schools modifying their language provision to provide continuity of language learning.

Impact of Specialist Language Colleges on KS3 teaching and learning

- In 2001 and 2005 Ofsted reported that foreign language provision in SLCs is more advanced than in most secondary schools in terms of offering a wider range of languages, working with primary schools, and attainment of GCSE grades.
- In 2008, however, Ofsted reported that pupil progress at KS3 in SLCs may be not as good as in other schools and that the demands of SLC status may distract from ensuring the appropriate levels of attainment of KS3 and KS4 pupils in the school.

Encouraging uptake at KS4 during KS3:

- There is no research, prior to the current study, on the effectiveness of measures taken during KS3 on languages uptake at KS4. The following recent findings refer to related issues such as the latest figures on languages uptake at KS4 and pupil motivation at KS3.
- DCSF (2008) figures show that between 1998 and 2008 GCSE exam entry numbers for languages fell by just under half.

- Coleman et al. (2007) found that there is a link between the level of KS3 pupil motivation and the attitude of the school leadership and teachers towards language study.
- There is evidence that pupil motivation generally declines between Years 7 and 8.

3.2 Introduction

This chapter reports on the main findings from the research and policy literature that relate to the following main areas of focus of the study: the influence of the KS3 Framework for MFL; the impact of specialist languages colleges; the impact of primary languages on KS3 MFL; the impact of the lifting of compulsory languages at KS4 on KS3 languages provision.

3.3 What is the extent and influence of the KS3 Framework for MFL?

3.3.1 Introduction

The KS3 Framework for MFL is designed to be a key component of the MFL programme within the Secondary National Strategy for KS3. By providing teachers with a 'mental map of language learning', it is hoped that the Framework will support teachers to enable pupils to become 'confident language learners, equipped with the skills and conventions of language learning' (DfES, 2003).

The KS3 Framework for MFL was introduced in response to concerns about standards, teaching, and pupil motivation in languages (e.g. DfES, 'National Developments in MFL'). The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), for example, reported in 2003 that pupils failed to make sufficient progress in MFL and that improvement in teaching and learning was slower in MFL than in other subjects. In an attempt to address this, the KS3 Framework for MFL focuses on knowledge about language and the application of knowledge and so aims to encourage 'a rethink of where the emphasis should be in language learning' (DfES, 2003).

Given its recent introduction in 2003, through statutory inclusion in initial teacher training (ITT) programmes but non-statutory application in schools, one might argue that investigating the impact of the KS3 Framework for MFL in schools only three years after its inception is a little early in terms of assessing its assimilation in MFL departmental culture. However, there are indications (Ofsted, 2004a; Muijs et al., 2005) that aspects of the Framework have successfully filtered through to classroom practice. This may be partly due to the recruitment of newly trained languages teachers, and partly to the intensive core training programme provided on a national scale and more local in-service training (INSET) programmes and local authority (LA) support to schools on the implementation of the KS3 Strategy. In its annual report on MFL the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) found that MFL teachers reported a positive impact from the Foundation Subjects strand of the KS3 Strategy, but that the subject-specific framework of objectives was not being widely integrated in planning and teaching of lessons (2004).

A revised version of the KS3 Framework for MFL is currently being developed by the DCSF with a view to dissemination to schools at the start of the 2009/10 academic year. This revision is aimed at a clearer alignment with the KS2 Framework and involves the specification of 5 separate strands of learning objectives: listening and speaking; reading and writing; intercultural understanding; knowledge about language; and language learning strategies.

The QCA and Ofsted reports described above highlight areas where the original KS3 Framework for MFL, when implemented, seems to be having a positive impact on KS3 teaching and learning. They also identify aspects of the Framework which have been less influential to date and suggest that implementing the Framework may impact negatively on some aspects of the curriculum. The findings are summarised below.

3.3.2 Indications of positive influence on teaching and learning

Reports by QCA and Ofsted indicate that the KS3 Framework for MFL, as part of the KS3 Secondary National Strategy, is having a positive influence on KS3 MFL teaching and learning. In line with the stated intention that the Framework should encourage teachers to rethink the focus of language learning (DfES, 2003), according to QCA, many teachers view the KS3 Framework for MFL as an invaluable tool for reconsidering approaches to teaching and learning (2005a). In the 2004/05 Annual Report, Ofsted noted the following in schools where the Framework objectives were implemented: 'more systematic good teaching of grammar, an increase in the range and effectiveness of classroom activities and in best practice, and greater focus on teaching skills as opposed to topics' (Ofsted, 2005).

Teachers reported revising how they planned and structured lessons in the light of the KS3 Strategy and the Framework for MFL, resulting in more focused approaches and greater pupil awareness of the learning objectives (QCA, 2005; Ofsted, 2004b). There is also evidence that teachers are using a range of Assessment for Learning strategies including self-assessment and peer assessment, in line with KS3 Strategy recommendations (QCA, 2005). In schools where the KS3 Framework for MFL was piloted, Ofsted judged the quality of teaching as good or better in more than two thirds of the lessons observed, and rarely unsatisfactory (2004b). This represents a higher proportion of good teaching than is normally observed (*ibid*) and so suggests that implementing the recommendations of the KS3 Framework for MFL has helped to improve standards of teaching.

Early observations indicated that, where implemented, the KS3 Framework for MFL has had a positive impact upon pupils' learning. Ofsted noted that in 2004, for the first time, 50 per cent of Year 9 pupils nationally were working at National Curriculum Level 5, and suggested that this might reflect the impact of the KS3 Strategy and Framework (2005). In Ofsted's Annual Report 2004/05, improvements were observed in pupils' understanding of how language works and their confidence and accuracy in speaking, as well as in their ability to apply new language to their own chosen contexts' (*ibid*). Similarly, the evaluation of the KS3 Strategy identified that pupils were developing increased knowledge of form and structure and were applying it to write at greater length and with more spontaneity and that some were also writing with greater accuracy (Ofsted, 2004b). Teachers, too, reported that pupils were more able to manipulate language as a result of implementing the Framework objectives (QCA, 2005). However, three years later Ofsted have reported that pupil progress at KS3 'is slower than it should be where work is insufficiently demanding [...] and where content is not sufficiently interesting and relevant' (2008: 4).

Similarly, early reports indicated that following the recommendations of KS3 Framework for MFL and the KS3 Strategy may help to improve pupils' language learning motivation and attitudes to MFL. For example, according to QCA (2005a) 68 per cent of teachers believed that strategy approaches had improved pupils' engagement with learning MFL. Ofsted (2004b) and QCA (2004) reported a positive impact on pupils' attitudes, among boys in particular. Teachers observed that pupils were becoming more independent learners, better able to improve their work (QCA, 2004) and to take control of their learning (QCA, 2005a). However in their latest report, Ofsted conclude that pupils' lack of competence in speaking skills had a 'negative impact on their confidence and enthusiasm' (2008: 4).

3.3.3 Indications of areas where the Framework has had less influence

'Cultural knowledge and contact' represents one of the five strands of objectives in the KS3 Framework for MFL but seems to have had little influence in many schools (Ofsted, 2004b; QCA, 2004; Ofsted 2008). Ofsted concluded that in a significant number of schools the development of cultural awareness is limited by insufficient access to authentic texts in the target language (2004b).

There are other areas of concern where the Framework seems to have had little impact. For example, speaking for real purposes was rare (Lee, 2005), and there was limited time available for reading for pleasure and writing at length (Ofsted, 2005). Ofsted judged that teachers' use of English was often unnecessary. Also, certain aspects of the KS3 Strategy were not widely established. These included the use of plenaries and assessment for learning (Ofsted, 2004b).

3.3.4 Evidence of extent of influence

Prior to this study it was not clear to what extent the KS3 Framework for MFL was used to inform planning and teaching. Ofsted reported that the implementation of the Framework was not widespread (2005). In 2004, QCA observed that schools other than those involved in the pilot were only beginning to integrate the Framework into planning and teaching (2004). In 2005 Ofsted noted that the Framework objectives were not built into the schemes of work of all MFL departments (2005a).

3.3.5 Summary

As outlined above, the reports which comment upon the influence of the KS3 MFL Framework provide early indications that it has had a largely positive impact on KS3 MFL teaching and learning, where it has been implemented. However, as the KS3 Framework for MFL has only been in operation for about three years, little research into the nature and extent of its influence has been undertaken. The main findings outlined above are drawn largely from Ofsted and QCA reports. They emphasise the influence of the KS3 MFL Framework on the delivery of MFL, not its impact on learning. To date, there has been no substantial study into the factors influencing the extent of the impact of the KS3 MFL Framework on provision and practice.

3.4 What has the impact been of KS2 language learning initiatives on the KS3 curriculum?

3.4.1 Introduction

The primary languages initiative has been seen by successive education ministers as a key policy initiative in the drive to raise standards in language learning in schools. As of 2011, foreign language learning will become a statutory requirement in primary schools in England. In anticipation of this date the majority of primary schools have begun to offer foreign language learning to their pupils, albeit in an overall uneven pattern (Lines et al., 2007). It is hoped that as foreign language provision at KS2 becomes established, it will have a positive impact upon language teaching and learning in KS3. The KS2 Framework for Languages (DfES, 2005) provides support to embed foreign languages into the primary curriculum and the potential for a bottom-up approach on which secondary teachers can build for progression in language learning. The support has included:

- the provision of training for existing primary teachers and for teacher assistants with language skills

- funding for initial teacher training which incorporates development of language skills
- the establishment of regional and local learning networks to support language learning
- the development of the National Advisory Centre for early years primary language learning (National Advisory Centre on Early Language Learning (NACELL), based at the National Centre for Languages (CILT)
- the establishment of 19 local 'Pathfinder' authorities, where approaches to teaching languages were trialled in 1000 primary schools from 2003 to 2005.
- the development of the Primary Languages Training Zone www.primarylanguages.org.uk, an online resource offering digital examples of current language classrooms, think piece articles on aspects of teaching and learning and guidance for teachers, leaders and trainers in primary languages methodology
- a national 'training the trainers' initiative managed by CILT which involves working with local authorities, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and schools to disseminate key messages about the Key Stage 2 Framework and the principles of language learning for primary age children
- the QCA has produced new schemes of work for French, German and Spanish.
- the British Council is providing opportunities for primary teachers to take part in a two- week project to improve their linguistic skills in a European country and primary schools can work with other schools to employ a foreign languages assistant. Currently, 250 assistants work in primary schools and the number is increasing.

Over time, these measures should also promote greater consistency and coherence in primary foreign language provision (QCA 2005). Currently, however, foreign language provision at KS2 and its impact on the KS3 curriculum varies significantly and this presents a considerable challenge for KS3 planning.

In what follows, the impact of KS2 language learning on the KS3 curriculum is described in terms of the challenges presented to KS3 planners and evidence of the positive and negative impact of KS2 provision on KS3.

3.4.2 Brief overview of foreign language provision at KS2

Foreign language provision at KS2 has been growing steadily but in an uneven and disjointed pattern in recent years. A survey of 3,789 schools conducted in autumn 2007, with a response rate of 69 per cent, indicated that 84 per cent of schools in England were providing pupils with the opportunity to learn a language within class time (Whitby et al. 2008).¹ This represents a significant increase on the earlier findings of a survey in 2002-2004, that reported 44 per cent of primary schools offering some form of foreign language teaching in KS2, with only 35 per cent occurring in curriculum time, and taught mainly by class teacher (Driscoll et al., 2004). Lines et al. (2007) revealed that in 2006 91 per cent of the schools in their survey sample taught French, 25 per cent Spanish, and 12 per cent German. Similar findings were reported by Whitby et al (2008) based on evidence from a survey conducted in 2007. However, in its most recent report, Ofsted expresses concern

¹ The final DCSF survey of KS2 languages learning, following on from the surveys in 2007 and 2008, is forthcoming in summer 2009.

over the sustainability of language provision in individual schools, reporting that 'in 2006/07 eight out of 30 schools that had introduced languages had subsequently abandoned them because of staff absence or departure: this highlights the need for a sustainable model' (2008: 30). However, Ofsted noted that despite the difficulties in the early stages of introducing language teaching in the primary curriculum, pupils in their survey revealed 'generally very positive attitudes towards learning languages' (2008: 33).

3.4.3 Challenges to KS3 teaching

Range of provision

The range of provision and differing models of foreign language delivery in the primary sector at the moment present a challenge to all planners for KS2 to KS3 progression. In their evaluation of the piloting of KS2 foreign languages in 'Pathfinder' LAs, Muijs et al. commented that the complex patterns of KS2-KS3 transfer in the majority of Pathfinder LAs created real challenge in achieving continuity and progression (2005).

Transition arrangements

There seems to be a degree of uncertainty about how best to manage transition. Driscoll et al (2004) reported that only 49 per cent of specialist language colleges and 29 per cent of other secondary schools were satisfied with their transition arrangements. Half of all primary schools surveyed for their study (966 primary and middle schools) reported having no transition arrangements. Ofsted reported that details about the languages, skills and knowledge gained in KS2 are not always successfully transferred to the secondary school MFL department (2005). With inadequate understanding of primary foreign language developments, senior managers had little awareness of their impact upon the KS3 curriculum. Ofsted commented that even in the secondary schools where the language teachers were engaged in primary foreign language teaching, there seemed to be little appreciation of the need to change KS3 teaching in the light of KS2 initiatives.

Assessment

An additional challenge to planning for continuity and progression from KS2 has been the absence of systematic procedures for assessing attainment and progress in KS2 (QCA, 2004). As primary foreign language teachers see the main aims as 'raising awareness', 'promoting interest and enthusiasm' and 'providing a positive, enjoyable language learning experience', formal assessment and recording of learners' progress is rare (QCA, 2005). Boodhoo *et al.* (2005) echo this, stressing that more transfer information is needed about individual pupils, and comment that when primary foreign language teachers provided written comments about learners' aptitude and engagement, these enabled KS3 teachers to take account of prior learning.

3.4.4 Indications of the positive impact of KS2 language learning initiatives

Early reports in the literature of signs of a positive impact of the KS2 initiative on KS3 provision have pointed to an awareness among some secondary languages departments of 'the need to rethink the KS3 curriculum in response to KS2 foreign language initiatives' (Muijs et al. 2005). In one Specialist Language College (SLC), for example, the Year 7 pupils were taught by the same teacher they had worked with the previous year (*ibid*). The QCA Annual Report 2003/04 identified that where primary and secondary language teachers co-operated well, effective transition arrangements enabled continuity and progression at KS3. Secondary schools (usually SLCs) with direct involvement with primary school language teaching seem to be more likely to have established procedures so that KS3 teaching builds on provision at KS2 (QCA, 2004).

The positive impact of KS2 language learning on KS3 MFL has been noted in the development and use of transfer information, curricular changes and learners' confidence and motivation as outlined below.

Transfer information

To enable appropriate KS3 MFL planning, some schools have developed transfer documents (Muijs et al., 2005; Ofsted, 2005; QCA, 2004). These may include indications of pupils' levels of attainment, using schemes such as the Junior Portfolio² and the Languages Ladder³. In some secondary schools, information about students' prior learning and attainment was used to establish ability groups or individual learning targets. SLCs were more likely to differentiate MFL teaching and learning for pupils on entry in Year 7 (Driscoll et al. 2004).

Curricular changes

Some secondary schools have introduced changes in the language options available to provide continuity of learning. Ofsted, for example, reported that one secondary school offered two languages in Year 7 so that all students could continue learning the language taught at their primary schools (2005). As many of their students had learned Spanish at KS2, another school established a Spanish club, and increased the number of Year 8 Spanish classes (*ibid*).

In some schools, KS3 MFL teachers were rethinking the curriculum in the light of students' KS2 learning. For example, KS3 teachers from one school worked with KS2 teachers to develop a bridging unit of work to ease transfer (Ofsted, 2005). In another school, the perfect tense was introduced in the first module of Year 7 ('Les vacances') to ensure all learners have a new challenge (Muijs et al., 2005).

Ofsted (2005) reported that a number of schools 'fast-tracked' learners as a result of their language learning at KS2. Several schools, mainly SLCs, set students early in Year 7 and 'fast-tracked' high attaining students to take GCSE at the end of Year 9 (*ibid*). In one Pathfinder LA, the SLC aimed for students to finish KS3 at the end of Year 8, and to follow the GCSE course in Year 9 and Year 10 (*ibid*).

Pupil confidence and motivation

QCA and Ofsted have reported that good experiences of language learning at KS2 seem to have a positive impact upon KS3 teaching. Teachers noted learners' increased confidence and enthusiasm, as well as improved foreign language pronunciation (QCA, 2005). Where primary foreign language portfolios were used to acknowledge prior learning, students seemed to have increased confidence and motivation (Ofsted, 2005).

² The Junior Portfolio is a version of the *European Languages Portfolio*. This is a Council of Europe initiative being implemented for learners at all stages of education across Europe. It comprises: a personalised learning diary making children aware of their achievements as they learn; a dossier where learners can file work and materials to illustrate the achievements recorded, and an overview of the learner's knowledge and experiences of different languages, including cultural experiences.

³ See: http://www.dfes.gov.uk/languages/DSP_languagesladder.cfm. The system is intended to complement existing national qualification frameworks and provides a 'ladder of recognition' starting at an initial level of 'breakthrough' competence and continuing beyond school alongside GCSE, A Level and NVQ national qualifications. The ladder consists of four series of 'can do' statements (reading, writing, listening and speaking) against which pupils and teachers can assess learner progress.

The QCA and Ofsted reports, and the evaluation of KS2 initiatives, suggest that KS2 language learning initiatives were having a positive impact on KS3 MFL in the secondary schools which try to recognize and build upon pupils' primary language learning. However, the reports indicate that this was not widespread. The limitations of the impact of KS2 foreign language teaching and learning are outlined below.

3.4.5 Limitations of the impact of KS2 language learning initiatives on KS3 languages

The findings of a number of reports into foreign language provision at KS2 indicate that in many schools the impact on KS3 teaching has been very limited (e.g. QCA, 2004; QCA, 2005; Muijs *et al.*, 2005). As described in the paragraphs below, the reports suggest that this may be related to a lack of transfer of information, poor use of transfer information where provided and the challenge of teaching KS3 learners with very varied levels of MFL experience and attainment. The reports also indicate that not taking into account KS2 language learning may have negative consequences for learner motivation and professional relationships between KS2 and KS3 teachers.

According to the QCA and Ofsted reports, the limited impact of KS2 foreign languages on the KS3 MFL curriculum reflected a general lack of transfer of information between primary and secondary school and of detailed pupil attainment records in particular (QCA, 2004; QCA, 2005; Ofsted 2005). Similarly, the evaluation of the Pathfinder LAs suggested that MFL teachers are often unaware of what the students have already learned, so pupils 'covered again, at Key Stage 3, most if not all of what they had already learnt at Key Stage 2' (Muijs *et al.* 2005).

The QCA and Ofsted reports also raise concerns about the use of information about pupils' prior learning. The reports suggest that even where information was passed to secondary schools, few used it to inform KS3 MFL planning or teaching (QCA, 2005; Ofsted, 2005). Ofsted reports that despite their involvement in planning and implementing KS2 foreign language provision, SLCs' KS3 teaching has often not developed to meet the students' changing learning needs (2005).

There are indications that failing to adjust KS3 MFL teaching to take account of pupils' prior learning can have damaging consequences on learners. The Ofsted report highlighted that higher attaining Year 7 pupils who repeated in the early months of KS3 language learned in KS2 were frustrated at 'starting again' (2005). This resonates with discussions at a QCA seminar (2005) about some Year 7 pupils' 'disaffection and discomfort' in language lessons and their regret at 'wasted learning'. Equally, in the same discussions it was noted that some students new to language learning are not comfortable in classes with others who have some prior language learning experience (*ibid*).

There may also be consequences for the professional relationships between KS2 and KS3 teachers if KS2 learning is not recognised. The evaluation of the Pathfinder LAs revealed that KS2 teachers reported feeling disheartened and frustrated that their language teaching might not be acknowledged or built upon at KS3 (Muijs *et al.*, 2005).

3.4.6 Summary

The issues outlined above relating to foreign language provision at KS2 and the transition from KS2 to KS3 are largely based on evidence from a small selection of schools rather than national surveys, and derive in the most part from Ofsted and QCA reports rather than systematic research investigations. It should also be noted that the focus of existing work has been on schools which have received additional funding and support for foreign language provision at KS2 and that the main areas of investigation have been organisational issues, such as transition issues and models of language provision, rather than curricular and learning issues.

It has been shown, for example, that ‘the success of [primary foreign language] curriculum development depends to a significant extent on the way transition is managed and the ability of secondary teachers to take full advantage of pupils’ prior learning’ (QCA, 2005: 9-10). The QCA and Ofsted reports and the evaluation of the Pathfinder LAs note that the current range of provision at KS2 and the diversity of primary foreign language models render planning for appropriate KS3 provision problematic. Some schools have responded to the challenge in innovative ways and we can look to them for ideas. However, it seems that in many schools more thought needs to be given to MFL teaching at KS3, in order to build upon the language knowledge, understanding and skills students developed in KS2. As Muijs *et al.* comment, the impact of KS2 language learning initiatives on the KS3 curriculum may be more meaningful when foreign language teaching at KS2 and 3 is thought of as ‘a coherent whole not as two separate programmes’ (2005). The nature of teaching and learning in the KS2 and KS3 curriculum and the progression from one phase to the next is an area which would merit further investigation.

3.5 What is the impact of Specialist Language Colleges on KS3 curriculum and teaching?

3.5.1 Introduction

SLCs are part of the Specialist Schools Programme, which was introduced in 1995, and has included SLCs since 1996. Specialist school status is available to all maintained secondary schools in England (Ofsted, 2001) and DCSF (formerly DfES) has encouraged the rapid expansion of the number of specialist schools (Judkins and Rudd, 2005). At the start of this study there were 2602 specialist schools (DfES, The Standards Site)⁴, of which 274 were SLCs (Specialist Schools and Academies Trust website). At that point in time the Government was investing £30 million ‘to increase the number of specialist language schools and increase their role’ and it was hoped that ‘by 2010, 400 specialist language schools will be working with other local schools to teach languages’ (DfES, 11.3.05). In the 2008/09 academic year there were 309 language colleges.

An early survey of the impact of the Specialist Schools Programme highlighted a number of features observed in the participating schools across the specialisms (West *et al.* 2000). The authors report that specialist schools were popular with parents. Receiving additional funds and resources from Government and sponsorship (mostly from the European Union and businesses) enabled specialist schools to increase the number of teaching and non-teaching staff employed and ICT equipment. The majority of participating schools had increased the number of hours allocated for teaching the specialist subject and had introduced new specialist subjects or courses into the curriculum for pupils of different ages. The investigation also found examples of curriculum innovation and creative teaching methods as well as initiatives to address underachievement and the introduction of extracurricular activities related to the specialism. The average annual improvement in examination results was higher for specialist schools than for non-specialist schools. The report concluded that the Specialist Schools Programme can be considered to have broadly met its objectives. It should be noted, however, that there is little specific mention of SLCs.

Much has been written elsewhere, however, about the broad aspirations of the SLC initiative, in general and regarding curriculum and teaching. Making a positive impact upon MFL teaching and the curriculum is considered central to the role of SLCs (e.g. DfES, The Standards Site). It is highlighted at the beginning of their ‘mission statement’:

⁴ This has since risen to 2695, of which 309 are Specialist Language Colleges.

Language colleges will raise the standards of achievement in MFL for all their students across the ability range. They will be active learners in a learning society with their local families of schools and their communities, sharing resources and developing and sharing good practice. (CILT website)

However, while CILT, for example, states confidently that SLCs 'are perceived to be at the hub of change in developing effective practice in Modern Foreign Language learning,' that they 'use and develop best practice techniques for raising educational standards,' and 'work with other schools and the wider community in sharing facilities and educational resources', there has been little published research that deals specifically and extensively with the impact of the creation of SLCs on the level and quality of MFL teaching and learning either in the SLCs or in schools more widely.

The main evaluations of SLCs were undertaken in general reviews of specialist schools by Ofsted: Specialist Schools: an evaluation of progress (2001) and Specialist Schools: a second evaluation (2005). The earlier report was based on evidence from inspections of the 327 specialist schools designating and operating since 1998 and special visits by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) to 46 specialist schools, including 9 SLCs. The later report was based on performance data relating to the 521 specialist schools operating in 2000 and HMI visits to 52 specialist schools including 14 language colleges.

The Ofsted reports provide a useful preliminary survey of the effectiveness of SLCs, but aspects of the reports are open to criticism in terms of research methodology. For example, the implied longitudinal comparison between findings from schools in the two reports can be questioned since it is not clear that the same schools were surveyed in the two reports. Secondly, the features of high achievement listed are presented without an indication of the frequency with which they occurred or the conditions in which they may have developed.

The findings of these reports regarding KS3 MFL curriculum and teaching are outlined below.

3.5.2 The impact of SLCs on the curriculum

Both Ofsted evaluations of specialist schools indicate that MFL provision in SLCs is more advanced than in most maintained secondary schools. The reports highlight that specialist status has had a positive impact on the following aspects of the curriculum in SLCs (2001 and 2005):

- greater number and variety of languages offered;
- increased time allocation for MFL;
- opportunities for pupils to learn several foreign languages (typically three during their school career);
- two languages taught to all pupils in KS3, or from Year 8 or 9 in many schools, with the option of a third language in Year 9 in some schools;
- greater uptake of MFL at KS4 and Years 12 and 13;
- elements of bilingual learning in many SLCs;
- good range of enrichment activities relating to MFL (e.g. foreign language clubs, special days / weeks focusing on a MFL or country where MFL is spoken, taster lessons of other languages);
- increased presence of native speakers including FLAs;
- increased opportunities for visits or work experience abroad.

The same areas were highlighted in both reports with the exception of bilingual learning, which is only mentioned in the earlier evaluation.

3.5.3 Languages teaching at KS3 in SLCs

In the 2001 evaluation of the specialist schools, Ofsted reported that MFL teaching at KS3 in SLCs in 1999/2000 was good or very good in 90 per cent of the lessons observed, which was well above the national average. The following characteristics of the good and very good teaching observed across the year groups were highlighted:

- more consistent application of the principles of effective foreign language teaching methodology;
- very positive attitude to learning languages and cultural awareness promoted by teachers;
- extensive use of the target language;
- successful group, pair and individual work with well-structured teacher inputs and support, often by native-speaking language assistants;
- careful grammar teaching to improve the communicative use of the spoken language together with accurate writing;
- emphasis on correct pronunciation and intonation.

Ofsted's second evaluation of specialist schools reported that the quality of teaching at KS3 was not as high as that observed in 2001 (2005), though 89 per cent of MFL lessons were judged good or very good. This difference of just 1 per cent was attributed partly to the samples of schools involved in the two evaluations and partly to an increased focus on KS4 lessons because of the immediate impact of KS4 teaching on published results. The following characteristics of good teaching were noted (*ibid*):

- range of teaching approaches;
- range of strategies, including sharing learning objectives and interesting starters;
- overt teaching of grammar;
- using FLAs to improve speaking skills;
- teachers modeling and encouraging high standards of pronunciation
- using ICT to support speaking, listening and writing skills;
- monitoring student progress and achievement;
- tackling student underachievement;
- fast-tracking opportunities for very able pupils;
- revision clubs.

The impression given in the reports is that 'the quality of teaching in specialist schools is better than in non-specialist schools' (2005). However, Ofsted's 2004/05 annual report presents a different picture, drawing on data from Ofsted inspections which took place between September 2003 and July 2005. The report expresses concern about pupils' progress in MFL during KS3 nationally and states that 'this is as true in specialist language colleges as it is in other maintained schools'. It suggests that this may be, in part, a corollary of increased emphasis on KS4 teaching. The report notes that, despite significant additional funding, 'in a sample of [language] colleges visited by HMI, teaching and learning were good or better in just over half of the Key Stage 3 lessons observed' (2005). It suggests that the demands placed on SLCs may 'result in them being distracted from the central priority of ensuring that their pupils make good progress in MFL throughout both key stages' (*ibid*).

Nevertheless, there is evidence that some SLCs have developed innovative teaching ideas as a result of their language college status. QCA notes that 'a small but growing number of schools, mostly SLCs, are trying to make the language courses more interesting and relevant to learners by using content traditionally associated with other subject areas as the context for language learning' (2005). Another SLC collaborated with Cambridge University's Language Centre and Asset Languages to offer Year 9 pupils a language course, the junior Cambridge University Language Programme (CULP) involving online and weekend study as well as attendance at Cambridge University's Language Centre, and access to a range of self-study resources (DfES 'Innovation in languages teaching and learning'). These examples suggest that SLC status may have had an impact on KS3 MFL teaching in at least some of the designated schools, but the extent to which SLCs have developed MFL teaching at KS3 as a result of SLC status remains unclear.

However, three years on, in its most recent report on the state of foreign languages in schools, Ofsted concludes that while SLCs continue to offer a wider range of languages and to provide valuable outreach work particularly in supporting primary languages provision, they no longer performed better in examination results than the national average (2008: 45).

3.5.4 The impact of SLCs on KS3 languages teaching in other schools

When the Labour Government re-launched the Specialist Schools Programme in 1997 there was a new focus on sharing specialist expertise and facilities by specialist schools with other schools and local communities (Yeomans *et al.* 2000). Developing and sharing resources and good practice are fundamental to the role of SLCs (DfES, The Standards Site), so it is to be hoped that SLCs are enabling non-specialist schools to improve their MFL teaching, including at KS3.

In 2001, Ofsted reported that, in about half of the language colleges visited, support for other local schools in the partnership was good. It is not clear, however, to what extent these SLCs were supporting local secondary schools to develop their KS3 MFL teaching; some, at least, were assisting primary schools to introduce French or German in the last two years of KS2.

In a review of research on specialist schools in general, Castle and Evans (2006) commented that there was little focused research on the effect of specialist schools on the wider educational community.

Schagen, Davies, Rudd and Schagen (2002) attempted to gauge the impact of specialist schools on neighbouring secondary schools. They compared the performance of specialist and non-specialist schools (not exclusively language colleges) within the same Local Education Authority (LEA) with a norm represented by schools in LEAs where none of the schools was designated as specialist. The findings indicate that specialist schools achieved above average results at both GCSE and KS3. While 'competing' non-specialist schools obtained results mainly at or below the norm at GCSE, at KS3 they performed as well or better than schools in LEAs without specialist schools.

Furthermore, the DfES expectation that specialist schools develop expertise in the specialist subject and hand this on to partner schools to enable them to improve their practice (DfES, 2001) implies a hierarchical model for improvement, which Sinkinson challenges in a case study analysis of a mathematics and computing specialist school. She questions the assumption that identified excellence in teaching and learning within one particular department can be transferred to departments in partner schools. She also cites evidence that hierarchical models do not always achieve the desired outcomes (2006).

3.5.5 Summary

The nature of the impact of SLC status on MFL curriculum and teaching at KS3 within the specialist language college is not clear. The Ofsted evaluations of specialist schools (2001 and 2005) highlight areas of good practice observed in SLCs, but these are presented in a decontextualised way and with no indication of how common these practices are. Ofsted reports (2004/05, 2008) raise questions about pupil progress at KS3 in SLCs as in other schools, and even suggest that the wider demands of SLC status may distract MFL departments from their primary responsibility of ensuring KS3 and KS4 pupils make good progress.

There has been no systematic large scale study of the impact of SLCs on MFL teaching and curriculum in non-specialist secondary schools. There is little evidence of the effectiveness of the contribution of specialist schools to the enhancement KS3 MFL teaching across other secondary schools, or whether any such initiatives are perceived as valuable by the other schools.

Research into the impact of specialist status on SLCs' KS3 MFL teaching and curriculum and into the impact of SLCs on KS3 MFL provision in neighbouring secondary schools is needed to evaluate the policy and its effects. This forms part of the focus of the present study.

A broader focus of investigation, which has been entirely neglected in the literature, is the impact of different specialisms on the status and practice of language teaching and learning in a given school. How far do MFL teachers and senior management incorporate their vision of language provision in their school within the specialist focus of their school? This too was a focus of the case studies in this research.

3.6 How can language learning at KS3 best encourage uptake at KS4?

3.6.1 Introduction

In 2003, MFL was removed from the core curriculum at KS4 in England. This was part of a government reform of curriculum and qualifications which aimed to enable young people to take 'personalised pathways' appropriate to their needs and aspirations, with equivalent value accorded to academic and vocational qualifications. Most schools responded to this requirement to broaden the curriculum by offering a wider range of courses and by making subjects such as MFL optional at KS4 (Blenkinsop *et al.*, 2006).

GCSE exam entry figures published by the DCSF (2008) showed that over the last 10 years the proportion of all pupils entered for a GCSE exam in languages has fallen by just under a half: from 75 per cent in 1998 to 44 per cent in 2008 (www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000815/index.shtml).

This decline (though possibly beginning to level off from 2008) has caused widespread concern within and beyond the languages community. In response to this decline in uptake, ministerial guidance issued in January 2006 outlined an expectation that schools should work towards setting a benchmark of 50-90 per cent of pupils taking MFL at KS4. The Dearing and King Languages Review re-iterated the policy position that, for the time being at least, mandatory provision of languages at KS4 would not be re-introduced (Dearing and King 2007: 4).

There has been a marked increase in the number of schools that have withdrawn MFL's compulsory status post KS3. The series of CILT annual Language Trends surveys shows that in the last few years the percentage of non-SLC maintained secondary schools in which language learning is compulsory is low (25 per cent in 2005 and 22 per cent in 2008).

The figures for state schools stand in sharp contrast to those for the independent sector, where the study of one or more foreign languages to 16 has been compulsory in 97 per cent of schools (CILT, 2004) and 88 per cent (CILT, 2008). State schools which have withdrawn MFL's compulsory status are characterised by a number of factors: they are more likely to be less highly achieving schools, with more students on free school meals and are more likely to be situated in the north of England. Schools maintaining compulsory status are more likely to be high achieving schools in the South-East and also have a higher than average number of EAL pupils (English as an Additional Language) with a mother tongue other than English (CILT, 2005).

3.6.2 Decline in numbers of languages learners

The number of students taking French and German at KS4 has decreased sharply, though there has been an increase in Spanish uptake. CILT's Language Trends data indicates that 'Spanish is set to overtake German as the second most commonly taught language after French' (2008).

Concerns about post-16 languages study have been well rehearsed (Fisher 2001, Watts, 2003, Graham, 2004, Marshall, 2001 etc). Numbers of MFL university students are also falling, despite increased HE entries (Marshall, 2001; Watts, 2004; Footitt, 2006). MFL was identified in the National Languages Strategy for Higher Education as an area for concern (HEFCE, 2005).

Ofsted (2003) notes the difficulty of recruiting MFL staff, drawing the conclusion that the decline in uptake at post-16 will lead to 'a smaller pool of suitable qualified candidates for entry to course of initial teacher training'. It would seem that the pool of potential linguists might well be decreasing further.

3.6.3 Structural factors behind this decline

The literature highlights a number of structural factors which may work together to discourage young people from learning MFL at KS4. These include pressure on schools and departments to report high levels of attainment through the publication of league tables, poor Career Education and Guidance (CEG) and the promotion of new and vocational subjects.

Davies *et al.* (2004) observe that schools and departments are under pressure to report improving levels of achievement, and that departments are able to report higher rates of achievement by discouraging lower achieving learners from taking GCSE. They note that this is most common in MFL departments.

McCrone *et al.* (2006) argue that CEG can enable young people to make informed subject choices when delivered effectively and at an appropriate time. However, in her study of GCSE and post-16 learners, Fisher reported that the participants had received poor guidance regarding the benefits of language learning (2003). If this is widespread, this may have implications for uptake at KS4, KS5 and university.

McCrone *et al.* (2006) also report that vocational courses have been strongly promoted, with GCSEs in vocational subjects introduced and policy imperatives to remove perceived gaps in status between vocational and academic qualifications. There are indications that the vocational value of MFL may not be self-evident (CILT, 2005, Marshall, 2000). MFL is in

competition with new subjects which learners may perceive as easier and with explicitly vocational courses, and timetable options blocking against these subjects seems to be having an adverse effect on MFL uptake (CILT 2004). It may be that the drop in numbers of language learners reflects the attraction of other subjects rather than the rejection of MFL.

3.6.4 Learners' attitudes towards languages

While structural factors have an impact upon learners' choices, it is also apparent that there is often a 'climate of negativity' (Graham, 2002) around language learning. Given the concerns about declining numbers of language learners in KS4, KS5 and university in the UK, there has been a considerable level of research into learners' attitudes towards MFL.

While the attitudes of learners are informed by their interpretations of different language learning experiences, similar concerns are expressed by learners of different ages with surprising consistency. Across the age groups, MFL is perceived by many as difficult, not enjoyable and not relevant (Blenkinsop *et al.*, 2006; Clark and Trafford, 1996; Davies, 2004; Fisher, 2001; Graham, 2002, 2004; Marshall; Stables and Stables, 1996; Stables and Wikeley, 1999, 2003; Watts, 2003, 2004; Watts and Pickering, 2004, 2005).

Helen Myers, past president of the Association for Language Learning and assistant headteacher at a Specialist Language College, has argued (2006) that statistical analysis of GCSE results across subjects indicates there was on average a half grade difference between languages and other subjects and a whole grade difference with some subjects such as English, Art and Drama. This difference in grading arguably contributes to learner perception of languages as a 'difficult subject'. Myers's view of the existence of 'severe grading' of languages at this level was echoed by Dearing and King in their 'Languages Review' in which they report that they found 'strong confirmation of the view that the award of grades [for languages] is more demanding than for most other subjects' (2007: 12). In response, the QCA have argued that the exam system is not aptitude-based and have declined to make adjustments to the national grade standards in GCSE languages, preferring to focus on 'improving levels of teaching and learning' in order to boost pupils' commitment to the subject (2008: 8).

Beyond the issue of perceptions of comparable difficulty between languages and other subjects, there are also indications that young people in each of the age groups may not be confident in their language learning ability despite achieving high grades (Fisher, 2001, 2003; Graham, 2002, 2004; Stables and Wikeley, 1999; Watts, 2003, 2004). This has serious implications given that subject enjoyment, the perceived usefulness to future careers, jobs or training, and self-perceptions of ability are identified as the basis on which pupils at Year 9 make KS4 subject choices, together with the influence of relatives, teachers and other personal contacts (McCrone *et al.*, 2006)

Amongst reports of young people's negative attitudes to language learning are also indications of more positive views. Fisher (2001) reported that young people may not see the relevance of language learning for their own lives but nonetheless recognize the importance of MFL in many sectors of society. Most of the young people in her study rejected the idea that English speakers do not need to learn other languages as 'everybody speaks English'.

Similarly, while Stables and Wikeley (1999) believed that as language learners in the UK lacked instrumental motivation and also integrative motivation⁵ in the form of curiosity about other cultures, the GCSE learners in the study undertaken by Clark and Trafford (1996) indicated that they would welcome more time talking to native speakers such as FLAs and visiting the country, and that they would like to learn more about the target language country and customs. The A level pupils who participated in Fisher's research (2001) also revealed a high level of cultural interest and a desire for a greater cultural emphasis in their studies.

The most recent large scale survey of pupil motivation in foreign language learning in the UK (Coleman *et al.* 2007) was carried out in 2005-06, involving 10,000 KS3 pupils in schools in England. The survey indicated that the nature of pupil motivation was 'highly complex' and that the most common features were 'instrumental, integrative and achievement orientation, effort and perceived language aptitude' (p. 270). The authors also found that there was a link between the level of the pupils' motivation and 'the nature of their school environment, especially the attitude of management and teachers towards language study' (*ibid.*). The authors also found that motivation declined between Years 7 and 8 and again, though less steeply, between Years 8 and 9. The study indicated that girls continue to be more motivated to learn languages than boys.

3.6.5 Summary

As can be seen from the studies and initiatives reviewed above, there has been extensive research into learners' motivation and attitudes towards MFL, and into teachers' strategies and institutional factors which might encourage young people to continue their language learning experience. There has, however, to date been no research to investigate the specific impact of the KS3 Framework for MFL on young people's language learning motivation, in addition to other initiatives. The current research project will seek to address this from a number of perspectives, in particular those of MFLs of MFL departments.

3.7 General conclusion

This overview of the literature related to the four research questions at the heart of this study indicates that in at least three areas the research is patchy and focused on explicit performance rather than exploring underlying influences. Taken as a whole, the research would suggest that the success of national policy initiatives on foreign language provision and practice in schools is affected by interaction between a range of factors (institutional, individual, pedagogical or policy-related).

It is clear that there is as yet no conclusive evidence as to the extent and nature of the impact of the initiatives. This is partly due to the selective nature of much of the reporting that has been carried out into these topics, and partly due to the restricted methodologies used. The national scope of this study and the use of a mixed-mode methodological framework sought to provide a more reliable and in-depth understanding of the impact of the policies as well as drivers and challenges to higher standards in foreign language learning.

⁵ The distinction here is between a utilitarian disposition in the former (e.g. wanting to learn languages in order for vocational reasons) and a positive disposition to the target language community (e.g. wanting to learn languages in order to communicate with people in that community).

4 The extent and influence of the KS3 Framework for MFL

This chapter presents the findings relating to the question: what is the extent and influence of the KS3 Framework for languages? It begins by discussing heads' of department familiarity with the framework and their use of it for departmental planning, before examining its impact on classroom teaching and learning. Its influence on pupils' perceptions of languages learning, on pupil attainment and on evidence that it might act as a catalyst for change are examined in later sections.

4.1 Key findings

The surveys and case study interviews suggested that most of the heads of department strongly approve of the KS3 Framework for languages, with 75 per cent of heads of department reporting that the Framework was having a positive impact on teaching and learning at KS3, and 71 per cent listing the Framework as a 'supporting factor' in KS3 teaching and learning. This support for the Framework was based mainly on its conformity with teachers' prior beliefs and approaches to language teaching. In both rounds of case study interviews, this was expressed as approval of a return to explicit teaching and learning, in the sense of explicit learning objectives and an explicit focus on grammar. In addition, 75 per cent of heads of department in the second survey reported a positive impact of the Framework on pupil learning.

There was evidence from both rounds of the case study interviews with heads of department and teachers that the Framework was largely embedded in their pedagogical thinking. This embedding was evident in departmental familiarity with the content of the Framework (shown both in the survey and the case study evidence). In the second round of the case studies the majority of teachers and heads of department responding to the question: 'If the KS3 Framework had not existed, would you still be where you are with languages teaching?' indicated that the Framework had been influential in a positive way on the quality of their teaching. The most frequently used phrase to explain the influence was 'it makes it [teaching] more structured'. Almost all the teachers who thought that the quality of their work was unaffected by the Framework, said this was because the Framework advocated an approach that they already believed in and adopted.

Pupil interviews in the first round of the case studies revealed an understanding of the objectives and of the structure of lessons. The purpose of learning grammar and grammatical concepts had been made explicit to them. Pupils were also able to use grammatical terminology to discuss their learning. There were frequent references made to the progression from word level work to more complex work on building sentences and even texts, indicating that the KS3 Framework was having an impact on pupils' awareness of the processes involved in learning how to extend their target language output.

There was an increased focus in the second round of case study on the development of pupils' independent learning, which was usually framed by the teachers interviewed as the development of pupils' thinking skills. This was achieved through a pedagogy that encouraged greater independent manipulation of the foreign language.

The most frequently mentioned way in which the Framework (and National Strategies in general) had impacted on language teaching was the practice of Assessment for Learning (AfL), in particular target-setting and peer assessment. There seems to have been an increased focus in this area between the two case study visits. This focus on AfL was reflected in the pupil data; the majority of pupils in both rounds of case study visits reported knowing what they needed to do to get better at language learning for example: revising; making more varied and complex sentences, and using more tenses; practising listening skills.

While in both rounds of the case studies, nearly all pupils reported that their teachers used the target language frequently in their lessons, the interviews with teachers and heads of department suggested that one of the consequences of the increased focus on explicit teaching of grammar had been a reduction of the amount of teacher use of target language, with the risk of an overall reduction of pupil exposure to communicative target language input. The majority of the case study heads of department, including those in Specialist Language Colleges, reported a decrease in target language use.

The survey revealed that the Framework has not had as great an influence on the teaching of culture, with only 12 per cent of respondents saying that it had affected their practice significantly. This was confirmed in both rounds of case study interviews with heads of department, who nevertheless believed that cultural objectives *should* be integrated in KS3 teaching.

4.2 Knowledge of and training in the KS3 Framework for MFL

In order to gauge the impact of the KS3 Framework for MFL on provision and practice of KS3 language teaching in schools, the 2006 survey first addressed the question of departmental knowledge of the Framework. With the exception of three respondents, all heads of department said that they had seen the KS3 Framework for MFL. A large majority (84.9 per cent) said they had participated in training on the Framework. Of the departments that had taken part in training, 58.4 per cent said this consisted of out-of-school training, 11.8 per cent had participated in in-school training, and 11.8 per cent (51 schools) had both in-school and out-of-school training on the Framework. Two schools had received no training. In 82.5 per cent of cases the training was provided by a Local Authority languages specialist; 18.8 per cent received training from a Local Authority non-language specialist. 174 schools (33 per cent) said they participated in training from other providers, such as from Advanced Skills Teachers (ASTs), local networks of schools, language colleges, the National Centre for Languages (CILT) trainer, or independent consultant.

In most cases, 87.7 per cent of schools, the heads of department had attended the training. There was a lower percentage (50.3 per cent) of second in department attending the training as well; and in just over half the schools (55 per cent) the training had been attended by one other languages teacher from the department. In a third (34 per cent) of the schools the training had been attended by the whole department. There appears to be a link between participation in training on KS3 and the head of department's view on the level of impact of KS2 on the Year 7 curriculum. Of the 81 respondents who had not participated in the training, half also reported no impact of KS2 on Year 7, whereas of the 504 who had participated in training, a smaller percentage (35.7 per cent) reported no impact of KS2.

Respondents in the first survey reported overwhelmingly that they (as heads of department) were familiar with the KS3 Framework for MFL (49.1 per cent were 'quite familiar' and 41.2 per cent were 'very familiar') while familiarity within the department as a whole was considered to be a little weaker (54.4 per cent 'quite familiar', and 26.2 per cent 'very familiar'). It would appear from the survey that neither regional variation nor school status affected the level of departmental familiarity with the Framework.

In the second survey, approximately a third of responding heads of department (33.1 per cent) said they had participated in additional training in the past twelve months on the KS3 Framework for MFL but a relatively small proportion of respondents (19.2 per cent) reported changes in the way they had used the Framework in the past year. Crosstabulation of those who had participated in additional training with those who said there had been changes in the way they had used the Framework revealed that, not surprisingly, the majority (69.9 per cent) of those who had received additional training had made changes in the way they used the Framework and the majority (76.2 per cent) of those who had not received training had not.

The changes the heads of department noted included:

- Increased use of the Framework to inform departmental planning (23.2 per cent);
- Use of the Framework for Assessment for Learning (AfL) (18.8 per cent);
- Use of the Framework to support a focus on particular language skills (15.9 per cent);
- Use of the Framework to support a change in teaching style (13.0 per cent);
- Increased use of the Framework to inform lesson planning (10.1 per cent).

4.3 Use of KS3 Framework for MFL

The 2006 survey also sought to elicit information on use of the KS3 Framework for MFL in different areas of departmental work. With regard to lesson planning, 31.8 per cent said they used the Framework for long, medium and short term planning, 23.9 per cent said they used it only for long term planning, 19.6 per cent only for medium term planning, and 8.4 per cent said they used it only for short term planning.

In terms of language teaching, the Framework was seen to support the teaching of words, sentences and texts 'to some extent' by 59.9 per cent and 'significantly' by 32.1 per cent of respondents. It supported the teaching of listening and speaking 'to some extent' according to 68.1 per cent and 'significantly' according to 21 per cent of respondents. It was also seen to support the development of cultural knowledge and contact 'to some extent' by 74.1 per cent and 'significantly' by 11.9 per cent of respondents. It would seem then that overall the Framework is perceived as having some effect, though not dramatic, on the language learning objectives it explicitly targets. The data show a similar pattern in a school status breakdown of responses relating to the planning use of the Framework. The scores for non-specialist, non-language specialist, and single specialism language college mirrored one another and indicate that about a third in each category used the Framework for long, medium and short term planning.

With respect to monitoring and assessment of pupils, 219 schools (37.9 per cent) in the 2006 survey said they used it as a tool to track pupils' progress in Years 7-9. School status does not seem to be a significant factor in influencing whether or not the Framework was used in this way. The most common other methods of tracking progress at KS3 mentioned in response to an open question were the use of internal tests (35.9 per cent) and cross-referencing pupil performance with the National Curriculum levels (30.4 per cent). Very few mentioned assessment for learning (2.8 per cent), continuous assessment (3.3 per cent), or pupil targets (1.1 per cent).

4.4 Broader objectives

In the first survey, respondents' views were sought on some of the broader objectives of the Secondary National Strategy which vary in the degree to which they are integral to foreign language teaching and learning, but which are all transferable to other teaching and learning contexts. Respondents were asked to rate 12 items of the wider objectives of the Secondary National Strategy on a scale of 0-10. Table 5.1 shows the mean score in the ratings given to each of the 12 items and also indicates the number of respondents who rated each item.

Table 4.1: Mean scores for the items listed in Q32 in the first survey (Rating of wider Framework objectives)

	N (number of respondents)	Mean score of the ratings given to each of the 12 items
Starters	590	8.46
Plenaries ⁶	587	7.70
Assessment for Learning	588	8.01
Peer assessment	574	7.29
Self-assessment	572	7.18
Target setting	572	7.27
Giving comments rather than grades	563	7.18
Thinking skills	559	6.53
ICT across curriculum	556	6.38
Literacy and learning	530	6.24
Ideas from Pedagogy and Practice booklet	423	4.29
Counselling	380	2.92
Other objectives	16	6.00

The scores indicate that most of the objectives were considered 'valuable' by the respondents, with the highest rating being given to Starters, Assessment for Learning, and Plenaries.

4.5 General impact of KS3 Framework on language teaching

There was evidence from the interviews with heads of department and teachers that the Framework was largely embedded in their pedagogical thinking. This embedding was evident in departmental familiarity (shown both in the survey administered in November 2006 and the case study evidence) with the content of the Framework. Most of the teachers interviewed reported that they had received training on the Framework during teacher training, within the department or through other in service training (INSET), and that they had discussed the Framework within the department, though sometimes not since it was first introduced. Most of the heads of department interviewed were comfortable in referring to different aspects of the Framework and revealed good knowledge of the content. For young heads of department, the Framework approach is often accepted as the natural perspective for teachers to adopt rather than a switch from a previous different approach to the delivery of

⁶ Whole class discussion at end of lesson.

the KS3 languages curriculum: *'I don't know a lot of language teaching without the Framework [...] I can't imagine another way of teaching without giving it the Framework [...]*'

Another way in which this natural and uncritical perspective is expressed by more experienced heads of department is that the Framework basically reflects what they have always believed in doing:

I don't mean to sound pompous, but for me it hasn't taught me anything that I didn't already know, but for maybe younger teachers who are new to that sort of thing, it actually guides them [...] (Head of department case study round 1)

This is just what we've been doing all along, but just reorganising it differently. They were talking about starters. We've always done starters and we've always done little connectors, and we've always done wrapping up at the end of a lesson, and we have always had grammar, and we've always tried to have fun in class. We have always prepared our own materials. So yes, we've got it all, we introduced it to the schemes of work, everything is there, but personally I haven't changed things much. We've integrated things without noticing, it is happening. (Head of department case study round 1)

Often this whole-hearted endorsement is made against what heads of department and teachers see as the previous prevailing communicative approach⁷ to teaching:

I think the Framework was a huge relief to many people of my generation, that we felt it was a return to traditional skills and values underpinning language learning. (Head of department, case study round 1)

From my point of view, it has actually given me official permission to actually use structure and grammar within lessons because for twenty years we had no permission to actually use... not even terminology. (Teacher, case study round 1)

It came out on my first year and I thought it was so refreshing after.... Because I was taught, my PGCE was communicative and that was stifling and that's how I found it. And the kids didn't know what I was saying. They didn't know how to manipulate the language. They forgot things that they'd memorised. [...] The kids just had to memorise loads and did not actually get anything out of it. They couldn't be creative. The Framework was like a breath of fresh air. (Teacher, case study round 1)

This interpretation by many heads of department and teachers raises questions about the extent to which their reading of the Framework is complete (given the explicit endorsement of the communicative approach in the Framework document). As will be seen in the following sections, some of the heads of department and teachers interviewed revealed a more nuanced support for the Framework based on a more holistic view of the aims and methodology of language teaching:

But certainly it's changed the way we teach over the last certainly four or five years. Perhaps the emphasis is slightly different. It's less of communicative teaching, although that does go into it. But it does involve a lot more things like thinking skills, inductive grammar and stuff like that. (Head of department, case study round 1)

⁷ 'Learning to use the [target] language for real communication' (DfES, 2003: 18).

For me, it's not only relying on the communicative approach which cannot be possible because of the length of time we have with them. Years ago, the main focus was communicative approach and then we discovered obviously that it doesn't work by itself because students cannot move on. We don't have the time to communicate enough and they cannot build with the language because they don't have the structure so we went back to structure. But for me it's a mixture of [both approaches].

(Head of department, case study round 1)

Headteachers tended to focus on whole school implementation of the National Strategies, leaving the detail of the implementation of the KS3 Framework for MFL to individual heads of department. Echoing the comments of the heads of department and teachers above, one headteacher mentioned that languages teachers had been already implementing many aspects of the Strategy in their teaching:

Suddenly everybody was now giving their attention to well-constructed lessons with sharp openers and child-centred activities and plenaries at the end and objective-led learning so kids understood what they were getting out of the lesson, could see what progress they were making. But I think languages teachers have been ahead of that for a long time.

(Headteacher, case study round 1)

4.6 Impact on focus of language teaching

There were three important features of the heads of department and teachers' perceptions of the importance of the Framework approach to languages. The first is the emphasis on **explicitness**, a feature which was unanimously endorsed in relation to the teaching of grammar. This explicitness is contrasted with prior approaches to grammar that are prevalent, for instance, in pre-Framework languages textbooks and classroom teaching, in which input alone was given prominence and pupils were expected to glean grammatical understanding implicitly. Sometimes the new official approach is seen as endorsement of didactic, rule-based grammar teaching (mostly transmitted in English) as was evident in several of the lessons observed. Often, however, this endorsement went beyond a simplistic belief in focusing largely on explanations of grammatical rules and was seen as an '*analytical approach*' to the teaching of language and structure:

I actually think that if the kids are going to understand the rules, the patterns, the differences, why can't we discuss it? Why can't we talk about it? And I know that that's quite prevalent in the department: that there is that kind of analytical approach, talking about the difference in sounds. That to me, is one of the main impacts on the way we teach. (head of department case study round 1)

The figurative language used by a couple of teachers revealed their understanding of this '*analytical approach*' to language learning. One teacher, for example, compared learning a language with learning the rules for rugby:

Give people a ball and two teams. [...] If you just said, 'Right there you go,' they wouldn't play a game of rugby, they'd just all run around because you hadn't given them any rules and I compare that. Right you've got all the words. We need now to give the words the rules so they all behave in the same way. And they've got a real perception of how things work and that there's actually a science to languages, that it's not just oh you learn words, you put them together. No, it's not like that. It's about applying things and working things out and this class have got a real perception of that.

(Teacher, case study round 1)

In another of the lessons observed, a teacher told her pupils that they were 'investigators of language':

They need to be able to investigate a language and understand how it works and be able to understand things without always asking me. And that's why we play the Sherlock Holmes games and all those kinds of things. They become more aware that this is a language that I can explore and it's exciting rather than just thinking, 'This is a vocab sheet, go and learn it.' And that kind of an idea, that it's more an exploratory subject. [...] Be Sherlock Holmes. Think of this as a crime scene. What patterns can you find? What can you work out that you can see?' And by doing that and by them thinking this is an investigation, this is like a crime scene, it makes them realise that you know it can be fun and it can work out to pick out different things from it. (Teacher, case study round 1)

The emphasis is on explicit learning of the formal structures of the target language rather than how to use it for social interaction.

Explicitness about the language being learnt is complemented by another mode of explicitness endorsed by the Framework: explicitness about the learning objectives. The learning objectives were made explicit to the pupils in almost every lesson observed. Several teachers believed that the emphasis on learning objectives shifted the focus from the teacher to the learner:

I think it's given more of a focus to our teaching and I think it's made us [think] more carefully about what our objectives are and what we want them to get out of each lesson and how do we know what they've learnt? How do they know what they've learnt? (Teacher, case study round 1)

This impact on the learning environment in the language classroom was felt in the widespread explicit reference to the attainment target levels in the presentation of learning objectives at the start of KS3 lessons. The levels were also used as a means of differentiating work for the learners. Further evidence of this impact is that the levels were being used in the general feedback given to pupils in relation to progress:

Certainly the making explicit, the levels and giving pupils access to becoming conversant with 'level-speak' is something which I think is absolutely essential. (Head of department case study round 1)

The desire to help pupils go beyond the surface of the level statements can be seen as a valuable effort to help the pupils to use the levels as a scaffold for progression in learning.

I mean it's pupils understanding that 'Right. I've written three or four sentences. If I write them in a continuous loop and add some connectives and some opinion, I can change this level 3 piece into a level 4 piece'. And it's them having a mental checklist. Cos otherwise, especially the lower ability pupils who don't really have a concept of their own ability, would just say 'I'm going for a level 5 piece'. (Teacher, case study round 1)

These two domains of explicitness (grammar and learning objectives) were implicitly connected in the thinking of many current heads of department, and explicitly so in the case of some, as in the following example:

Trying to get them to use grammar and trying to raise the levels as well, really it's about presenting to the class [...] I still believe that the key to levels is the grammar and tenses, things like that. And I find the kids enjoy grammar, which is weird, and I think that because there's a set of rules they can apply, especially boys, kids in my class know that if they put a tense it's this level, if they use two tenses, it's this level, and they've got that quite clear in their heads. I think that's really important. (Head of department case study round 1)

A second major feature of the Framework commonly identified by many heads of department (and not unrelated to the development of explicit understanding about the target language and about learning objectives) as impacting on the teaching of languages is that of the promotion of **independent learning**.

The Framework was said by one head of department to have '*pushed the emphasis onto the kids' learning rather than just delivery*'. Other heads of department stated that the Framework gave the pupils the '*autonomy to learn independently*'. Some teachers perceived that the explicit grammar focus enabled pupils to learn and also to use the language more independently:

I think that it comes in quite naturally so again the grammar aspect of it whereby they're not just spoon fed. [...] It tends to move away from the spoon feeding and they can actually, they're given a sentence and if they're give a few other examples of vocab they can then substitute words and develop their own thoughts and opinions so obviously that covers different levels. So I think it's making more independent learners. (Teacher, case study round 1)

I think you more consciously teach it and get them to formalise it and write it down in their book and do examples of it. You really focus on it. So rather than learning to just communicate sentences or communicate words depending on the group. For them to become, I suppose, more independent in applying language in different situations. (Teacher, case study round 1)

Different ways in which the Framework was seen to encourage pupil **autonomy** in language learning include making the pupils '*less reliant on pre-digested sentences*', allowing the pupils '*to learn and not to spoon feed [them]*' and '*empowering*' the pupils to learn independently through '*breaking down*' and '*building up*' the language. One head of department reported that the pupils were '*focusing faster and they are understanding instead of just going purely for vocabulary*'. Learner autonomy was also seen to be linked to heightening pupils' **self-awareness as learners** partly enhanced through differentiation and assessment for learning strategies:

They have what they call super-learning day. How they learn best: visually, through hearing things etc. We make it quite clear there are different ways of learning vocabulary. [...] so we are trying to concentrate on the fact of pupils as individuals and responding in different ways [.] (Head of department case study round 1)

In the lessons observed, however, there were very few examples of independent learning or use of the target language. Most of the lessons were heavily teacher-led and teacher-centred. Therefore while at interview most of the teachers and heads of department indicated that they favoured a pedagogical approach that gave pupils greater autonomy in their learning this was not evident from the majority of lessons observed. The pupils' use of the target language was also tightly defined by the teacher in most of the lessons.

A third main way in which the Framework has triggered a refocusing of language pedagogy has been the switch away from the dominance of **vocabulary learning**. Rather than the topic-based, lexical focus on the language which still dominates the GCSE syllabus, the Framework influenced KS3 curriculum has seen a re-balancing between focus on form and focus on vocabulary. One head of department described the relationship between these two components of language in sequential terms:

*I think it changed your mental approach to a lesson really, and you know ... I think it does make you start from the structure of the language and it also starts from, you know, from the pupil experience which I think is good.
(Head of department, case study round 1)*

Another head of department made a similar comment by stating that 'vocabulary can come later'. This person also reported that she formulated the relationship in the following way to the trainee teachers that she mentored:

*I would say it's had a mindset impact in the fact that, not for me personally, but I think in many members of staff, it's topic, topic, topic, vocabulary, vocabulary, vocabulary. Where really it's skills and the phrase that I always use to my PGCE students is 'mastery, not coverage'.
(Head of department, case study round 1)*

The move to find a balance between a focus on form and on content was seen in several of the lessons observed. In one of the Spanish classes observed, for example, the topic was places in town. When introducing the places, the teacher focused the pupils' attention on the gender of the nouns and the implications for using *al* and *a la*. She perceived that since the introduction of Framework, she integrated a 'grammatical edge' in her teaching:

What I used to do is just teach them 'station' and 'disco' and whatever, but now I think I try to introduce things with a grammatical edge so they can in turn make sentences which makes sense, doesn't it, really? [...] If you teach them a noun, they don't know what to do with that noun, whereas if you teach them a noun with how to form it, how to put it in a sentence, then that will inform their kind of thinking skills. (Teacher, case study round 1)

In the second round of case study interviews (2007), the most frequently mentioned way in which the Framework had impacted on language teaching was the practice of Assessment for Learning. There appeared to have been an increased focus in this area between the two case study visits (2006-07). In one Technology College, the department had been using a camcorder to record drama sketches conducted by pupils in languages lessons and these were then played back to the pupils to allow them to assess each other.

4.7 Impact on lesson structure

Most of the teachers referred approvingly to the components of lesson format promoted by the KS3 Strategy such as starters and plenaries which were seen as helpful in the context of language lessons and included in the majority of lessons observed. One head of department went so far as to say that there was an intrinsic compatibility between the official structure of a Strategy lesson and foreign language learning: 'We felt we were actually a step ahead with that because languages ... it lends itself automatically to a lot of it.' Starters were unanimously seen to serve valuable pedagogical purposes and were reported to be universally used in lessons. In the lessons observed, starters were typically a brief revision of work covered in the previous lesson or for homework which would be built upon during the lesson. In a couple of lessons, the starters provided an imaginative beginning to the lesson

and engaged the pupils' interest and attention. In one lesson, the teacher played a song in French about going on holiday to set the theme. Another teacher began by presenting two world maps and asked pupils what the contrasting projections said about the importance of the different continents.

There was less clarity about the potential and nature of plenaries. To some degree this reflected an appreciation of the cyclical nature of language learning and a recognition that, while pupils can learn an aspect of the language in a formalised way, it will take time and revisiting for this to become internalised:

Plenary is an odd idea in languages, I think. [...] I find it really hard to apply it to languages. If we're talking about everybody feeding back and making sure they understand, I try and incorporate something of that nature as well. [...] In languages, because it's cyclical, because it's constant construction, you cannot stop and say, 'Oh, we've had a plenary; we've done that now,' because you've not. You've done a bit of it and then you do more of it, then you'll do it with some pronouns in, then you'll do it backwards, then you'll make it into a question. So you've never done it. So what I'm trying to say is I have a blurred line in my mind between practice and plenary. I don't know when we start to feedback, because we're always practising and learning. (Teacher, case study round 1)

Some heads of department stated that it was often difficult to fit them in to the timing of a lesson. Some definitions were minimalist consisting of little more than a whole class review of what has been learnt at the end of a lesson, rather than an activity which provides evidence of that learning. The minimalist approach was seen in a couple of the lessons observed. In one class, for example, pupils were asked how they would explain the lesson to someone who had been away. Some teachers used for the plenary a quick game, such as 'slap the board' and 'noughts and crosses' which drew on pupils' learning during the lesson. Other teachers used the plenary for writing or speaking activities in which pupils brought together different aspects of the lesson's learning.

One head of department gave a word of caution that there is a risk of saturation through excessive repetition of the same lesson structure over time: *'My worry is that students will get fed up with it. I do! Sometimes I think: do I really have to follow this format all the time?'*

4.8 Impact of Framework on KS3 Schemes of Work and lesson planning

To a large extent the case study heads of department and teachers judged the value of implementation of the KS3 languages objectives in relation to **the use or non-use of languages textbooks**. Some saw the existence of *'Frameworked'* textbook courses as a solution to the problem of lack of time to go through existing departmental schemes of work in order to weave in all the detailed language learning objectives. Although there was some evidence from the case study schools that 'frameworked textbooks' resulted in a continuation on reliance on external agencies (namely, textbook writers to plan activities in relation to the KS3 objectives), there was also evidence that for others it was a means for rapid integration of KS3 objectives into lesson planning. For instance, one head of department describes the role of textbooks here as a form of catalyst for rapid implementation of the Framework approach:

We had to go all the way through our scheme of work and then had to write units ourselves to make up for what our old text books didn't cover in that way. But as soon as we managed to buy the next year the course which was written with the KS3 Strategy in mind, we did keep a lot of the good practice that we had from the previous course and integrate that but basically things changed drastically very, very quickly and we immediately started getting totally new schemes of work together with the new sort of approach.
(Head of department, case study round 1)

Another teacher described the thinking in her department about how to use new resources in line with the Framework objectives as 'an ongoing discussion'.

The majority of those interviewed, however, saw the advent of the Framework as an opportunity to free themselves from excessive reliance on coursebooks. The guidance on the planning of language teaching content is seen by many as a tool for the construction of their own schemes of work: 'We started working using our own heads and using the pack and we were putting things into the scheme.' Another head of department described the Framework as a 'checklist' used in the auditing of the content of the department's own scheme of work:

Yes we audited both French and Spanish last year. Spanish in particular when I was re-writing it I had the audit by the side of me and put in things that we were missing [...] It's a checklist and from that point of view it's very useful.
(Head of department, case study round 1)

However, as new textbooks began to appear with the KS3 objectives cross-referenced some departments have again been tempted to rely passively on them for their planning instead of integrating the objectives into departmental schemes of work. Some see this as a time-saver; others, such as the following head of department, see this as a 'backward step':

It seemed unreasonable when somebody had sat down and been paid to produce things so we bought in the materials to help us. And at that point I felt that it was a backward step because we were relying on the textbook again.
(Head of department, case study round 1)

One of the themes emerging from this area of the investigation is the potential tension or lack of clarity in the heads of departments' minds about the relationship between centralised planning through the Framework and the autonomy of textbook courses. Some heads of department saw the Framework as a basis for constructing their own schemes of work, others continued to rely heavily on the schemes provided by the commercial coursebooks their school invested in. The logic of the relationship between centralised curricular planning and the particular schemes governing different textbooks is blurred and influences the extent to which different heads of languages and their departments develop their own thinking about the planning of their courses to suit the needs of their pupils.

Several teachers reported that they found the Framework objectives valuable in lesson preparation, particularly in focusing the planning on 'the actual language that I'm going to teach'. A couple of teachers described using the Framework objectives to plan lessons which ensure continuity and progression in the pupils' learning:

Things like introducing your high frequency words and reusing them so getting pupils to transfer from one unit to the next and to keep reusing ideas that they've had, all of that makes a big difference. The pupils today, they were supposed to introduce their opinions in this unit but I did it last unit because it fitted in with school subjects. They were very comfortable today with bringing back up what they'd done last time. And I think that sort of thing, like their

'because' and their justifications, all of that, having introduced it once, it rolls on well. And they like it because they like knowing that they know it and they like being able to reuse it rather than having to do everything from scratch again. They like familiarity, I think, in what they're doing.
(Teacher, case study round 1)

4.9 Departmental planning of the application of the KS3 objectives

Whilst widespread discussion of the Framework had taken place at departmental level, and much effort had been invested in incorporating aspects of it into schools' delivery of KS3 languages, there was some evidence that a whole-department focus was beginning to move away with the passage of time. In part this may be due to the fact that the Framework is now embedded in the school's provision of languages at KS3. In some cases, this 'embedding' is more holistic or representative of an accepted approach which is seen to be in tune with the Framework rather than an explicit cross-referencing of the different objectives within the department's schemes of work.

When asked to identify their future planning around the Framework there was hesitation and lack of clarity among some heads of department about what, if anything, they will be focusing on within their departments. Specific areas which were identified by some are the following: early entry to KS4 qualifications; increase of pupil use of target language; assessment for learning in relation to writing; KS2/3 transition; use of the Languages Ladder; KS4 uptake; and motivation of pupils.

One interesting finding which emerged in some of the interviews related to the personnel involved in departmental discussion of planning around the Framework. One head of department stated that the part-time staff in her department were non-specialists (teachers whose main specialisms were in other school subjects but who were employed to do some languages teaching as well):

I haven't really had departmentally anyone to discuss it with because the non-specialists, as much as I try, they're not interested in, you know. They're interested in science strategy and English.
(Head of department, case study round 1)

Given that the first survey indicated that over 40 per cent of schools have two or more teachers working part-time in the department, if the proportion of non-specialists in this figure is high then a significant number of individual teachers might not be engaging in meaningful departmental discussion and planning of the use of the Framework.

On the other hand, heads of department also reported engaging in useful discussions about the Framework through networking with colleagues at other schools, sometimes (as in the following example) through their involvement in initial teacher training:

In fact, funnily enough, it was at the ITT meeting which is the trainee teachers' mentors, they were all talking about the Framework and what are you doing and in the end we all decided, 'Well, can we have a session where we all talk about what we're doing?' I presented at that.
(Head of department, case study round 1)

4.10 Impact on pupil perception of language learning

There was some understandable hesitation among the interviewed heads of department and teachers about evidence of the impact of the Framework on pupil perceptions of foreign language learning. Some admitted it was *'difficult to tell'*. One head of department said that as the pupils had not experienced any other form of language teaching, there was no *'control'* to compare the perceptions with. One of the teachers said that the implementation of the Framework had improved the pupils' perceptions of language learning through the structure of lessons and the learners' understanding of grammar and ability to manipulate the language:

*I think it all sort of combines to move on together. The fact that they have a better structured lesson and the fact that they understand how it works and that they're able then to independently build ideas and say what they want to say rather than what the book tells them how to say, that sort of thing, I think all of that impacts upon their perception of the language.
(Head of department, case study round 1)*

Some heads of department did report perceiving an impact and mentioned added engagement through the pupils' awareness of learning objectives. One gave an interesting example of how this heightened **awareness of the process of teaching and learning** led to the inclusion of peer-teaching in a Year 8 lesson:

I have a Year 8 class and we've been doing the perfect tense with Year 8 and we've just started doing that. We went to the computer room and I said: 'Right. I want you to make me [...] a PowerPoint to explain to somebody who can't do it, how we do the perfect tense.' And they did it and it was really strange. I looked around and all of them had got on the first slide, you know 'Was lernen wir heute mit...?' [...] 'Today you will be learning...' [...] And then some of them had a go at lesson plans. So yes, I think that has had an impact. By the fact that they were doing that. They obviously liked the structure otherwise they wouldn't have used it themselves. (Head of department, case study round 1)

Impact on pupil perception was also gauged through effects on **uptake at KS4**:

*I'd like to think it's had something of an impact because when languages became optional in KS4 last year we still have 66 per cent of the year group opting to take languages. They must have kind of voted with their feet.
(Head of department, case study round 1)*

There was some thought that teaching according to Framework objectives had a differential impact depending on the profile of the learners. A head of department of an all boys school in the sample also believed that the Framework was particularly suitable for boys by providing *'structured lessons'* and opportunities *'to enjoy quick successes'*. Several teachers believed that the Framework has *'made it harder for the weaker [pupils]'* but also facilitated providing appropriate challenge for more able learners:

Let's face it, German isn't the easiest language. And I think conceptually some of them struggle. I'm not sure, higher ends who get it probably would be very chuffed with the fact that they are able to do it. It might cause more of a gap between the top and the middle maybe. But we are trying to push the top end, I suppose, as well as dragging the bottom to middle and bottom, lower middle along. (Teacher, case study round 1)

4.11 Impact on pupil attainment

There was a consensus amongst the case study heads of department that the Framework has had a positive impact on the pupils' attainment. This was measured quantitatively in terms of improvement in results. One head of department reported that the impact was 'terrific':

I've noticed a terrific impact in Year 9 now [...] We got some level 8s this year which is unheard of in the past [...] our SATs are going to be really high [...] I can genuinely say that a lot of people in Year 9 could get a level 6 and 7 fairly easily and we're getting in to the 8s. It's just that they're knowing how language works. They know what the verb is, they know what a noun is, they know sounds. (Head of department, case study round 1)

This reporting of the increase in level attainment at KS3 was echoed in most of the schools and seen as a measure of improving standards which was also considered useful for supporting the options process in going into KS4: 'When the children get their KS3 results, you don't want French still to be lagging behind all the other subjects. That certainly doesn't look good either.'

As far as the content of the language is concerned (linguistic competence), there was little mention made by the heads of department of gains in more communicative dimensions of language use (i.e. the pupils' ability to use the language for real purposes). Improvement is viewed mainly in form-focused, structural terms: pupils 'know how the language works', they are able 'to connect words', they have 'confidence in handling language'.

One head of department said, in contrast to the view of some teachers quoted earlier that the Framework made it harder for weaker pupils, that the less able learners benefited from the Framework in that it provided them with a grounding in the basics of language which was hitherto less available to them:

We don't get the impression that there are children who are lost nearly so much now. Previously I could say that you almost felt sometimes that you really ought to just start again from the absolute foundations, just start all over again because at some point that child has just lost the plot. We seem to now always just have some basics that we can go back to and think 'Well, you were with it until this point. We can push it a little further'. And I think now we know better how to teach them when they're lost. (Head of department, case study round 1)

In contrast, the teachers perceived the impact of the Framework not only in terms of an improvement in results but also in increasing uptake at KS4 and in pupils' more independent and imaginative use of the target language:

It's just encouraging the children to make more connections, to try and apply that to their next language session if you like. It's just trying to make them more aware of how the language works and what they can do with it as well. Giving them more ability really, to be able to be more creative as well to do something else. Not just describe a bedroom but to use the skills to study things that interest them really. (Teacher, case study round 1)

The language skill that was seen by the heads of languages and teachers interviewed to have been most supported by the Framework is that of writing:

They're able to write longer pieces independently. I think it's improved their writing most of all, I wouldn't say it's improved their speaking, because I think that's hindered a little bit by group pressure and embarrassment, so it's a little bit harder to assess. (Teacher, case study round 2)

A teacher in another school reported on the impact on the quality of coursework written by her Year 10 pupils:

They are more able to manipulate the language [...] An example is my Year 10s this year [...] They're probably the first lot to benefit from it. And I know they're a top set and they're good, but they did a first piece of coursework at the beginning of this term, and the standard of it was quite different at that stage from things that I'd seen previously. (Teacher, case study round 2)

4.12 Mediating influences in teachers' adoption of the KS3 Framework for MFL

It would seem that, in some cases at least, schools' response to the Framework, in terms of interpretation, adoption and implementation depended on to some extent on mediation of one sort or another.

- There was evidence that departments' thinking and practical response to the Framework was mediated by consultation with regional trainers or similar external advisors:

When I was writing the development plan last summer I just looked at the nuggets that are available and I talked to A who is the regional trainer for the Framework in our department and I said, 'These are my ideas. Where do you think we - What nuggets do you think we need to focus on at SA?' and we agreed. (Head of department, case study round 2)

- A second source of mediation mentioned by some heads of department and teachers was that of the textbook. In some cases, adoption of the Framework was represented by a switch of course book:

Yes, what we are doing now, we have to now, that's why we are changing our book. We used to use Métro, but we've noticed that there is a new book that is even more complete exhaustive into covering the KS3 Framework. That's Expo. So we are getting rid of Métro and getting Expo because it's more exhaustive. (Head of department, case study round 2)

- A third, more internal form of mediation is that of the department's own scheme of work. In this mode, departments did not view the Framework as a separate grid or set of objectives to be delivered *per se* ('I don't think people get their files out and say 'Is this 7W5 or whatever?'). The same teacher explained her use of the integration of the Framework within her department's scheme of work in order to plan the lesson observed in the following way: 'All I had to do for that lesson plan was open the scheme of work and pick out the bits I wanted to do for that lesson and the Framework was already in there'.

Underlying these different forms of mediation is the need, often explicitly expressed by the teachers, to 'internalise' or appropriate the KS3 Framework and to adapt it to the departments' own purposes.

4.13 Evidence of the Framework as catalyst for change

'If the KS3 Framework had not existed, would you still be where you are with languages teaching?' This direct question was put to case study heads of department and departmental teachers at interview in order to gain a sense of the degree to which they saw the Framework as having a fundamental influence on the quality of the work they do. The majority of the teachers who responded to this question (15 out of 26) answered in the negative, thereby indicating that the Framework had been influential in a positive way on the quality of their teaching. The most frequently used phrase to explain the influence is *'it makes it [teaching] more structured'*. Similar comments were made by different individuals about the Framework helping them *'to stay more focused'*, *'to reconsider and look at specific things'*, *'provoked us into thinking about how learners learn and how we teach'*. Almost all the teachers who answered in the affirmative, therefore indicating that the quality of their work was unaffected by the Framework, said this was because the Framework advocated an approach that they already believed in and adopted. Two teachers said that they didn't know the answer to the question.

However, beyond the personal approval of the overall pedagogical approach, there was little evidence of concrete ways in which the Framework had triggered change in the intervening year between case studies 1 and 2.

When asked whether they believed that the KS3 Framework for MFL was having a positive impact on language learning in their school, the majority of respondents (75.1 per cent) said that it was (a much stronger finding than the 8.1 per cent who identified the Framework as a supporting factor on teaching and learning in the 2006 survey question on supporting and constraining factors, as shown in Table 7.1). They commented in particular on improved understanding of language structures (27.2 per cent), increased focus on skills (17.3 per cent), improved structure of language lessons (14.9 per cent), and greater use of AfL (11.4 per cent). There was, however, little reporting of improvement of communicative competence of learners.

The 24.9 per cent of respondents who did not believe that the Framework was having a positive impact commented that they did not use the Framework (16.2 per cent) or that they had always taught in that way (25.7 per cent). Other negative comments included:

- There was too much planning and the Framework was too unwieldy to put into practice;
- The Framework was too prescriptive and there were too many objectives;
- The Framework had a positive impact initially but this had petered out;
- There was too little time for INSET on the Framework.

Heads of department were also asked whether they would like to see changes to the KS3 Framework for MFL. The majority (74.9 per cent) did not want to see changes, but about a quarter of respondents said they would like to see changes. Further crosstabulation revealed that the majority (81.1 per cent) of those who thought that the Framework was having a positive impact did not want to see changes to it, whereas those who did not think the Framework was having an impact generally wanted simplification and clarification of the Framework document, as can be seen in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Kinds of changes to the Framework that heads of department would like to see (second survey)

Changes desired	percent of respondents who commented
Simplify the Framework	32.9
Reduce number of objectives	7.9
Clarify Framework and make less vague	9.2
Make the Framework less prescriptive	13.2
Make the Framework more user-friendly	7.9
Demand less of learners	6.6
Number of respondents	88

5 The impact of the primary languages initiative on KS3

This chapter presents the findings on the impact of the primary languages initiative on aspects of the KS3 curriculum. It begins with an examination of stakeholders' views as to the value of the initiative and their concerns about implantation, followed by sections on languages provision in the participant schools' feeder primaries and consideration of data to do with transition and progression. The impact of the initiative on the profile of Year 7 learners and on the KS3 curriculum are presented in the next section, and the chapter ends with discussion of the ways KS3 and KS2 are currently working together and ways this might be developed in the future.

5.1 Key Findings

Most headteachers, heads of department, teachers and pupils in the case study schools approved of the principle of teaching languages in primary schools and schools which had the greatest liaison with feeder primaries over language provision were most positive about its value.

However, the perception of the majority of secondary teachers and headteachers was that there was a lack of consistency at present in foreign language provision in primary schools. This inconsistency was felt in terms of amount of language teaching taking place, the language being taught and the ways in which it was taught. Concerns for secondary teachers were primarily to do with the challenges of ensuring progression in Year 7 groups where there was such a wide degree of mixed experience.

Involvement of secondary languages departments with the primary languages initiative was not widespread. The data from the second survey and the second round of case studies suggested a growing awareness as to what was happening in the feeder primaries and of how the two sectors might begin to work together. In the first round of case study interviews, heads of languages and teachers mainly referred to the lack of language teaching expertise among primary colleagues and stressed the role of secondary languages teachers in providing support. In the second round, however, the secondary teachers were more likely to talk about opportunities for both sectors to learn from each other, especially in terms of their own learning from primary methodology.

Despite evidence of some increased collaboration, findings from both surveys suggested that the level of impact of KS2 language learning on the Year 7 languages curriculum remained low. Where impact of the KS2 initiative on Year 7 was reported, the area most commonly identified was that of pupils' level of vocabulary, increased confidence, and motivation to learn a foreign language at Year 7. Teachers voiced strong concerns about managing progression, however. Schools in the main were not drawing on pupils' prior experience or attainment, and there was little evidence from the qualitative data that the methodology of KS3 teaching was being affected by the introduction of language teaching in primary schools.

Headteachers and heads of department were generally unclear at interview about the direction in which their planning of KS2/3 language provision would proceed, though had better formulated ideas by the second survey. Heads of languages who already had a good level of experience of working with primaries identified more specific areas for development than those who had less experience including revising schemes of work, ensuring progression through using the Languages Ladder and KS2 Framework in primaries, and running language summer schools.

Nearly half of the pupils interviewed in the first round of the case studies said they had had some experience of languages at primary level. They held mixed views on the impact of their own experience at KS2 on their learning at KS3.

5.2 The value of primary languages

Most headteachers, heads of department, teachers and pupils in the case study schools approved of the principle of teaching languages in primary schools. The general view of primary languages was that it is a *'brilliant idea'* in theory, that it is a way of fostering positive attitudes and motivation for language learning and that it is valuable for people to learn languages at a younger age.

Schools which had the greatest liaison with feeder primaries over language provision were most positive about its value:

I think it's important that children do it as early as possible because they learn so much more. And I've done a lot of work with Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6 students and I think it's crucial at that age. I think they're brilliant. You mould them just how you want them. (Head of department, case study round 1)

The principle that children in KS2 should learn a foreign language received a high approval rating from the majority of the headteachers in the case study schools, though most expressed a high level of dissatisfaction and frustration with the policy's implementation. Typical comments included: *'It's fantastic, but it's very difficult to manage. I think that's it in a nutshell.'* The following headteacher, for example, saw the initiative as *'a mess'*:

I think what everybody else thinks about it. It's grossly underfunded and no chuffing leadership and no coherence across the thing and basically, here's a big problem, go and get it sorted yourselves. It's a mess. It's a bloody mess. And teachers will pick it up and will deal with it as well as they possibly can but it's a real opportunity being missed, I think. (Headteacher, case study round 1)

A minority of headteachers in round 1 had a more cynical view of the initiative, with one saying that introducing primary languages whilst making KS4 languages optional was a *'cop out'*, and another that the government was displaying *'back of the envelope thinking'* in its adoption of a seemingly easy solution to the problem of languages teaching in schools.

In the second round of case studies two heads remained dismissive of the value of KS2 languages as they saw it being delivered: *'I know that in some primaries, they're using it as a way of filling PPA time, rather than actually seriously as part of the curriculum,'* but three of the heads who had expressed strong concerns in the first year described feeling more positive about the value of PMFL as they saw it become established:

'I think that primary teachers are working incredibly hard to make sure that they can deliver the language in the best possible way, through my network meetings with other primary head colleagues and whatever, you know, people are, as you'd expect, rising to the challenge.' (Headteacher, case study round 2)

5.3 Concerns over implementation

The most common concern raised by headteachers in both years was regarding funding to support the degree of liaison required to secure effective progression from one key stage to another, especially given the large number of feeders some of the schools had to work with: *'You've got to do it. How? Well, we don't know. Got any money? No. How are we going to do it? Don't know. Just do it. And so you get this piecemeal response,'* (Headteacher, round 2).

There was also some concern about lack of clarity as to what language work in KS2 was to achieve (*i.e.* progression from KS2 to KS3 in the same language, or language awareness with the study of *'a little bit of this, a little bit of that'*), as well as staffing concerns, with some worry that if the teaching was not right in KS2 then children would devalue language study even more.

Two headteachers, both from schools with a very mixed ethnic intake, expressed concern in round 1 that there were a number of children coming through still 'struggling with basic English language' and questioned the suitability of introducing another language for these children.

Heads of department, particularly in round 1, expressed serious concerns over the shortcomings of primary languages. Some of those interviewed reported that non-specialist teachers in their feeder schools had been *'forced'* or *'put upon'* to do the teaching. There was a worry over the teachers' lack of appropriate linguistic skills:

A lot of the teachers are being forced into language teaching when they have no language skills. You know, a friend of mine has just qualified as a primary teacher and he's been made language co-ordinator but he doesn't speak any languages. He said 'I'm being made to teach French. I have no French whatsoever.' So that is, not only are they coming with very little, but what they have been taught, it's wrong, often wrong. (head of department case study round 1)

In both rounds of the case study interviews teachers interviewed voiced apprehension that language teaching by non-specialists could impact negatively on pupils' learning (particularly pronunciation) and motivation. There was also some concern about maintaining a professional approach whilst correcting prior learning: *'It's an area of professionalism, isn't it? You don't want to tell that your past teacher was incorrect when they were.'* In the second round there was also an acknowledgement that this might be the case in other subjects too, however.

As specialists, a few of the secondary teachers described feeling undermined by strategies designed to encourage non-specialist primary teachers to engage with teaching languages:

I went on a course where the words were, 'You don't have to speak it to teach it'. The secondary school teachers, we sat there going, 'Pardon?!' And what they were saying was that you could put a video on with children coming out of a French school and that would count as their French language. That would count. The language then would be 'bonjour, bonjour, bonjour'. And we sat there thinking, we've got degrees. They've paid for me to train to be a teacher and yet they're telling me that a computer can do my job. (Teacher, case study round 1)

Similarly, it was felt that, as well as appropriate linguistic skills, an understanding of how to teach languages is needed:

However, we want high quality language teaching. Right, so if somebody just happens to speak French, how can they be a teacher? Cos they're not. Actually, it took me a full year to be a languages teacher, so you're just saying that you can go in and be a languages teacher. (Teacher, case study round 1)

Another feature of the views expressed by the secondary heads of department in round 1 is that many felt that the secondary sector had been excluded from the process. It was felt that there had been a lack of sufficient consultation with secondary schools in general over the planning and delivery of primary foreign language teaching. This feeling was compounded by the fact that the introduction of the primary initiative has coincided with the abandonment of compulsory languages post-14, which echoes the views of some of the headteachers quoted above about 'back of the envelope thinking'. This feeling of exclusion at the inception of the initiative was also felt by some case study heads of department and teachers in relation to the local authority's (LA) attitude, where it was felt that they were planning for KS2 languages was done without involving secondary teachers.

In some cases, the perceived lack of engagement of secondary schools in the process of introducing languages at KS2 left teachers uncertain and rather passive about how to manage the changes that will be needed at KS3:

I think over the next few years it is going to have a huge impact, and that's the other thing of what do we do then? Everybody keeps going, 'What're we going to do? What are we going to do?' And we're waiting for somebody to tell us the answer cos we don't quite know what we're going to do. (Head of department, case study round 1)

In the second round of case study visits heads of department there were still some negative views voiced (including one teacher who is involved in delivering KS2 languages), but there was also evidence of changing attitudes and greater confidence in KS2 provision, especially as a result of KS2/3 liaison and joint working:

I do feel a lot more confident about the primary schools. I've had a couple of meetings. I've had one meeting - I don't know if I'd had it last year - I had one meeting and I got all the primary co-ordinators together, all seven of them, and we talked about who was doing which language for starters, which scheme of work they were going to use and what time scale they were going to introduce the languages on. So now we've got an overview of who's doing what, where, when, which scheme they're using so that made us feel better. And the brilliant thing about this year is, the LEA paid for one French, one Spanish, one German assistant that we share between us and the primary schools, no, two French assistants, and that's gone down really well at the primaries. (Head of department case study round 2)

The data in the second round of case studies suggest a gradual momentum building, where there are still some teachers who know little about KS2 languages, but others see KS2 languages as something that will be here to stay and where there are opportunities for the two sectors to learn from each other. One head of department reported in round 2 that the experience of working with feeder schools had encouraged him to modify his original proactive vision of a coherent uniform provision across the sectors to a more reactive and pragmatic approach that accepted the disparity of primary language experience:

Over the past year or so I think I've just chilled out more and accepted the fact that people are doing what they want to do and that we cannot really have any control over that at the moment. We can just support when they want us to. But I have been very impressed with the children that have come up from the primaries. I've seen some fantastic written work this year, children working at level four writing big, chunky paragraphs in the target language.
(Head of department, case study round 1)

Generally, there was a sense of greater involvement and in particular readiness to be involved in primary languages from the secondary heads of department and teachers in the second year of the case study. The majority of the case study sample schools had increased their involvement in provision of primary languages in their feeder schools. The following represents the range of activities in this area which the schools had engaged in over the year:

- Application for LA funding to support all members of MFL department to spend one hour per fortnight in a feeder primary;
- Increase in number of year group classes taught by secondary school staff;
- Shift from going in and delivering languages themselves to going in and supporting primary teachers teaching the language;
- Providing advice to feeder primaries about how to introduce language teaching;
- More formalised fact-finding about the nature and extent of language teaching in feeder schools;
- Training staff from feeder schools in the use of ICT for language teaching.

5.4 Pupils' views as to the value of the primary languages initiative

Pupils were asked in round 1 of the case study visits about their views as to the value of primary languages. [In round 2 the theme of primary languages was not investigated in pupil interviews as it was felt that pupils would not have any additional experience on which to draw.]

In general, pupils were very positive about primary language learning, with almost three quarters of the pupils interviewed individually and almost all the pupil focus groups expressing the view that primary languages were beneficial. The main reason given for their positive response was that primary languages gave pupils a head start in language learning: pupils learnt the basics of a language at primary school and were more prepared in terms of knowledge and confidence when they started secondary school. This meant they thought they would make faster progress at KS3 and would achieve higher grades at GCSE:

I think it would be good if you started it at primary and got all the simple stuff done and when you came here you could do more complicated stuff. You could get higher levels because you wouldn't have to go over the basics.
(Year 8 boy, focus group round 1)

Pupils also felt that languages were grasped more quickly and easily if they were learned at an earlier age:

*When you're younger you remember things a lot better than when you're older so when you're my age you tend to forget a lot of things.
(Year 8 boy case study round 1)*

Three pupils, all of them attending language colleges, expressed the view that it was good to learn languages at primary school if moving up to a language college and another three commented that experience of languages at primary level made it easier for pupils to take up two languages at secondary school.

A small number of pupils interviewed individually, and pupils in half the focus groups expressed negative or neutral views on primary language learning. They gave a variety of reasons for their responses, including the fact that primary pupils were too young to cope with languages and should concentrate on the three core subjects and that languages were better taught at secondary school:

I think it's good to learn like the basics of languages like numbers and how to say 'hello' and things but not too much because you've got other things. Like in Year 6 you've got your SATs and you've got to concentrate on English, science and maths. (Year 8 boy case study round 1)

5.5 Feeder primaries and their languages provision (rounds 1 and 2)

The questionnaires asked the heads of department about foreign language teaching in their feeder primary schools. In survey 1 50.1 per cent of the cohort reported that 'some' of the feeder primaries taught a foreign language on their timetable, 24.5 per cent said 'most' of their feeders did, 12.3 per cent said all their feeder schools did. Only 3 per cent said none of their primary schools taught a foreign language on the timetable. 10.1 per cent said they did not know whether their primary feeder schools did or not.

In survey 2 92.2 per cent of respondents (n=389) reported that there was foreign language provision in their feeder primary schools. Of these, 22.5 per cent reported that *all* their feeder primaries taught a foreign language, 43.9 per cent reported that *most* of their feeders did, and 25.8 per cent reported that *some* of their feeders did. Only one head of department reported no provision in feeder primaries at all and the remaining heads of department (7.5 per cent) said they did not know whether their feeder primaries taught a foreign language.

Comparing only the responses of the heads of department who had completed both surveys (see Table 4.1 below), there appears to be an increase in language provision at primary level, with 66.4 per cent of heads of department reporting in survey 2 that languages are taught in all or most of their feeder primaries, as compared with 39.2 per cent of responding heads of department in the first year of the survey.

Table 5.1: Percentage of feeder primaries teaching languages on the timetable in survey 1 and survey 2 (data from heads of department responding in both years only)

	% of feeder primaries with foreign language provision	
	Q1 2006 (n=389)	Q2 2007 (n=389)
None	2.4	0.3
Some	48.4	25.8
Most	26.4	43.9
All	12.8	22.5
Don't know	9.9	7.5
No of respondents to item	382	387

French was overwhelmingly named in survey 1 as the main language taught in the primary school (92 per cent). The second most commonly taught language was Spanish with German third. The foreign language teaching was delivered by primary school teachers in 35.5 per cent of cases, by a combination of primary, secondary and peripatetic teachers in 26.7 per cent of cases, and exclusively by secondary school teachers in 13.3 per cent of cases. In 17.2 per cent of questionnaire responses the secondary head of MFL did not know who did the languages teaching at their feeder primary schools. These findings echo those reported in the studies referred to in the literature review chapter (Lines et al., 2007; Whitby et al., 2008).

As it may be that where schools have a large number of feeders, issues of consistency of primary provision and continuity across the sectors become more acute, the questionnaires sought evidence of the number of feeder primaries. Questionnaire 1 revealed the most common number of feeder primaries per secondary school to be 6-10 (33.4 per cent of respondents), followed by 1-5 (27.9 per cent) and, thirdly, 20+ primary schools (14.4 per cent).

5.6 KS2 / 3 transition: language choice

The issue of transition of foreign language planning, learning and teaching gave rise in both years of the case study visits to strong views on a range of different but related matters. Because of the fact that primaries are able to choose the language they teach, harmonising the primary language taught with that available in Year 7 in the secondary school was raised as a difficulty by several headteachers. According to the heads of department in the case study schools, one of the main ways in which the KS2 initiative might be seen to impact on the KS3 languages curriculum is in relation to the choice of language taught at primary school. Yet there was a varied response from the case study schools in relation to which, if any, foreign language feeder primaries are providing for their pupils. Some heads of department do not take prior language learning experience into consideration at all in planning the choice of language for study at Year 7:

*We have children coming from schools where there have been no languages, we have children coming from schools where they've done five years of German. You know, there's such a mixed experience, we can't possibly accommodate their experiences at the moment.
(Head of department, case study round 1)*

This was also the case in the majority of the schools responding to survey 1, which revealed that 67.5 per cent of schools teach only one foreign language in Year 7, making the grouping of pupils according to the language studied at primary school a non-issue. 26.6 per cent stated that they grouped their Year 7 pupils by language irrespective of the pupils' primary school experience, while only 5.9 per cent took this variable into account when grouping.

There were instances in the case studies where heads of department were confronting the issue. One head of department revealed that she argued strongly with her leadership team that the identity of the main foreign language taught in her feeder primary schools needed to be considered in the choice of languages offered at KS3:

I just absolutely insisted that if we are able to introduce Spanish here in Year 7 in September, which we have to do because children that have done Spanish in primary school without a choice of languages, they may decide not to come to this school simply because we are not offering a choice of languages. It just has to happen. (Head of department, case study round 1)

Another head of department attempted to manage the issue of language choice across Year 6 and Year 7 by teaching a term of French and a term of Spanish at the main feeder primary school: *'We start after Christmas and we do one term French and one term Spanish so no matter what group they're put in [at Year 7], they've got basic knowledge of both.'*

A desire for continuity in the learning of the same foreign language across KS2 and KS3 is also reflected in the reported concerns of some parents, as explained by the following head of department:

*Lots of parents are not fully understanding of 'Oh my daughter's come from her primary school and done French, why are you making them all learn German?' And then I have to lay my stall out and say: 'Well, it's not the fact that they're learning German - it could be Chinese, it could be Hebrew, it could be whatever. It's the fact that I'm teaching them to learn a language, hopefully well. They can pick another one up later on if they so wish.'
(Head of department, case study round 1)*

A few teachers noted that their primary schools predominantly offered French and were apprehensive about the impact that this will have on language choice at Year 7 in their schools: *'It's increasingly hard to find children who haven't done French at KS2. So everyone I think - we're talking about it at the moment - is going to do French.'* There was concern at the apparent lack of considered rationale for teaching French and a belief in the importance of teaching a range of languages:

They should have the opportunity to do a variety of languages, shouldn't just be Spanish, shouldn't just be French, shouldn't just be German, because otherwise I think we're going to limit ourselves to just one language which is what's going to happen cos everybody's now teaching French because that's what the majority of French teachers know from what was taught ten, fifteen years ago when French was the main language, so they're teaching French again in these primary schools. (Head of department case study round 1)

For some heads of department the fact that the language learned in secondary differed from that learned in primary made for difficulties in progression of learning and operational convenience (*i.e.* the difficulty of dealing with mixed language experience pupils in Year 7 as will be discussed more fully in the next section).

Pupils also expressed some concerns about lack of continuity from KS2 into KS3. Ten pupils interviewed individually and pupils in over half the focus groups remarked that their primary language had not helped at all because they had not been able to continue with the same language when they started secondary school:

*If I was learning French, it would have really helped because I would have known some from the beginning. Cos when I first started learning Spanish, I didn't have a clue about anything because I didn't know any Spanish at all.
(Year 8 boy case study round 1)*

*The language you learn isn't the one that you're going to learn here so you get a bit mixed up about the words because you don't actually really know them.
(Boy, focus group case study round 1)*

Several teachers also expressed concern about the impact on pupils' motivation and behaviour of not providing continuity and progression in learning. There was also regret that this might result in a waste of prior learning. Others felt that learning a different language at primary school and enhancing language awareness through a focus on the development of languages skills, would benefit the learning of any language at secondary school. The case study schools on the whole were divided equally between those favouring continuity through the teaching of the same language across the sectors, and those valuing the development of generic language skills and therefore not too concerned about which language was taught in their feeder primary schools. The impact of the initiative in this area therefore is that secondary schools are having to be more explicit in justifying the choice of foreign languages they offer at KS3 (and this is likely to intensify as the amount and status of primary language teaching grows in the coming years).

5.7 Managing cross-sector progression of teaching and learning

Managing the variety of experience with which children were arriving at secondary school was the main concern of headteachers. They reported widely differing practices in primary schools, and, with several of the participant schools having over 20 (and one reporting 56) feeder primaries, this made planning in KS3 very difficult. There was some anger at the fragmented nature of the provision at KS2:

*It's just an incoherent mess; some people doing one thing, some people doing another thing, some people doing two languages, some people doing one language, some people doing hardly anything. All of that. And it's a nonsense. And it undermines the quality of the learning that goes on at KS3.
(Headteacher, case study round 1)*

Heads of department and teachers also expressed concern about the current and/or possible future impact of primary language teaching on progression of learning. In some schools the diversity of pupils' experiences already presented particular challenges to planning for progression:

*Some of them have spoken language, some of them haven't. Some of them do know what an adjective is, some of them don't. Some of them have done Spanish last year, but are now doing German. And obviously we try and accommodate them as much as possible, but it's French where we've got the problem, because this year we're not teaching French.
(Head of department, case study round 1)*

As one of the interviewed teachers said, secondary schools have been used to teaching 'mixed ability' at Year 7 but what they will need to develop expertise in is 'mixed experience' teaching.

Liaison

Respondents were also asked about the kinds of liaison that had taken place with feeder schools in the past year. Of those who responded to this question in survey 2 (n = 372), 28 per cent reported that there was no liaison between their department and feeder primary schools. Where there was liaison, this was in teaching MFL across KS2 and KS3 (33.6 per cent of respondents), either by a secondary teacher going into the primary school or a primary teacher teaching a Year 7 languages class, in sharing and producing language teaching resources (29.0 per cent), and in joint planning of KS2 teaching (25.3 per cent). 16.1 per cent of respondents also said that they shared data about pupils' attainment in languages. Only 3 per cent of the sample said that they planned the Year 7 teaching with their KS2 counterparts. Other forms of liaison noted included meetings for KS2 and KS3 teachers, and training offered by KS3 teachers.

Whilst direct comparisons between the data from Questionnaire 2 and Questionnaire 1 cannot be made because the items were worded differently, it is possible to see from the number of responses that there was little change in the level of liaison in terms of planning and production of resources, but that there did appear to be an increase in teaching across KS2 and KS3, as shown in Table 5.2:

Table 5.2: Forms of liaison which took place between secondary MFL departments and their feeder primary schools in 2006/7 and 2007/8

	Survey 1 2006		Survey 2 2007	
	Number of positive responses	% of 389	Number of positive responses	% of 389
Sharing pupil attainment data	152	39.1	60	15.4
Sharing and producing MFL resources	98	25.2	108	27.8
Joint planning of KS2 MFL teaching	97	24.9	94	24.2
Joint planning of Y7 MFL teaching	20	5.1	11	2.8
Teaching MFL across KS2 and KS3	79	20.3	125	32.1

In both years there was an ongoing desire for greater liaison between primary and secondary schools, where a number of teachers expressed frustration that they currently received insufficient information about the pupils' prior language learning.

In order to see if there was a link between liaison with feeder primary schools and heads of department' perceptions of the impact of the KS2 initiative on the profile of Year 7 language learners, responses to survey 2 q. 13 (How much impact is language learning at KS2 having on the profile of Year 7 language learners?) were cross-tabulated with q. 17 (Which forms of liaison with at least some feeders took place during '06-'07?). The first point that emerges from the analysis is that the majority of heads of department, regardless of different experiences of liaison, believed that the KS2 initiative has had 'a little' impact on the profile of the Year 7 learners.

Secondly, it is interesting to note that the group which generated the highest score for 'None [no impact]' (17.5 per cent) consisted of heads of department who said they had had no liaison with their feeder primaries. Thirdly, although only 11 heads of department in the sample said there had been joint planning of Year 7 language teaching, none of them said that there was no impact of the KS2 languages initiative on the profile of their Year7 pupils.

A further cross-tabulation of scores for q.15 ('Do you believe the KS2 languages initiative is having a positive impact on language learning at KS3?') with q.17 (different experiences of liaison) also shows that the largest negative response (57.5 per cent) was from heads of department who had had no liaison, whilst a strong majority of heads of department who had experienced liaison with their feeders also said that the initiative had a positive impact on language learning at KS3. In particular liaison through 'Sharing data about pupil attainment in MFL' and 'Joint planning of Year 7 MFL teaching' correlated most strongly with a positive view of the impact of the initiative on KS3 (84.3 per cent and 88.9 per cent respectively).

Managing transition

Headteachers, particularly of non-language colleges, were aware that KS2/3 transition required continued effort, expressing it in terms such as: *'This is our weakest link in terms of languages'*. They spoke about the need for effective transition procedures and were aware of the need to build on what the learners had done and not start again from scratch: *'That's a real challenge of for us to build on what they do actually know, and I would say that the major challenge is transition really.'*

Grouping

Ways in which some heads of department were currently trying to manage transition was through consulting KS2 scores from other core subjects, which in some cases are being used to inform the allocation of pupils to Year 7 tutor groups (and therefore to language groups). Few schools used data from languages classes in establishing groups. Most schools in the surveys (88.3 per cent in the first survey and 87.9 per cent in the second survey) said they did not assess pupils' foreign language competence at the beginning of Year 7. This may be viewed as a disregard for the pupils' linguistic experience prior to secondary school, or that departments believe that the pupils' level of competence is more appropriately gauged through more informal and indirect means during the first term in KS3. One head of department noted the difficulties that setting entailed, even where flexibility was there:

So you've got a mixed ability class in Year 7, well, you could say, 'Don't put them in mixed ability classes, put them in sets,' but how could you set a child just purely because they haven't done French. That's not fair on that child. They might be the brightest child in the world, but because they've not done French you put them in set 5. (Head of department case study round 2)

More than half of responding heads of department in the case studies reported that Year 7 groups were mixed ability. Survey 1 suggested that the majority of schools (62.9 per cent) have mixed ability grouping at Year 7, while 29.1 per cent set their language classes by ability. When asked in the second survey what data heads of department used to inform their planning of Year 7 grouping, a high proportion of respondents said they used KS2 general attainment data (62.5 per cent), 15.9 per cent of respondents said they assessed pupils' levels in the language in September of Year 7, and 10.4 per cent of respondents said they used data about pupils' language attainment at KS2.

Booklets

In order to try to strengthen transition a number of schools had developed transition booklets, usually produced (either in-house or adapted from official publications) by the secondary schools and distributed to feeder primaries for pupils to note down the things they have learned. In one case in the case study sample the head of department from a non-specialist comprehensive distributed the booklet to all primaries in the area and not only to the feeder schools. This decision reflects an underlying reality which potentially threatens the model of transition based on close collaboration between a secondary and its partner feeder schools: the fact that most schools also receive pupils from a wider range of primaries outside the catchment area. In order to compensate for the imbalance between amount of language teaching in main and peripheral feeder schools, one language college in the sample provided a week's intensive French course in July prior to Year 7 for pupils coming from the peripheral schools.

Bridging activities

Some departments took the decision to try to do something completely different with the Year 7 pupils in the first weeks in secondary so as to encourage them to believe that they would be learning something new. Others departments took the view that familiarity and repetition should be specifically exploited as a bridging device between Years 6 and 7, as for example in this language college:

*They remember their primary very, very well and very fondly and they might find it a bit harsh I think at the beginning. It might be a bit of a change that the lessons are longer. There are a lot more of them and things are expected of them. [...] There wasn't a lot of hard work as in writing lots involved... Most of them don't know how to write and when they come here it's a bit of a shock. They've got homeworks. They've got to memorise words. And so it is a bit of a shock. [...] When I wrote the schemes of work, I adapted the first and second units to kind of forget about the books and do what we did in primary. So we use the same songs that we used in primary. So if we're going to teach them the alphabet we use 'Twinkle Twinkle'. Even if it's not the same song in the books we kind of use the same resources that they use in primary. The same cover for the homework booklets so they feel like it's the same. It's like just the same. The next stage basically. But then that... After two half terms, we just kind of go into secondary. We've got two half terms in the middle.
(Head of department, case study round 1)*

There were a number of other transition initiatives that seemed to be working well for schools, including: the appointment of co-ordinators with responsibility for liaising with local primaries through network meetings; joint training activities with primary colleagues; 'master classes' for primary children held in the secondary school; a joint teaching appointment with the primary feeders; use of the secondary's communications suite by primary children and for development of the primary teachers' language skills; holding a 'French day' for learners and teachers from the primaries.

5.8 Impact of the KS2 initiative on teaching and learning in KS3

The survey results suggested that on the whole teachers believed that the pupils learning languages at KS2 were benefiting from the experience, and starting KS3 with positive attitudes to language learning, increased confidence and motivation and the knowledge of basic words and phrases in the target language. Views were divided in survey 2, however, as to whether the KS2 languages initiative is having a positive impact on language learning at KS3: 58.0 per cent heads of department thought that there was a positive impact and 42.0 per cent thought there was not.

Those in survey 2 who thought there had been a positive impact commented in particular on:

- improved motivation and confidence (over half of respondents).
- improved knowledge of language in Year 7, in particular of vocabulary, structures and general language awareness. This meant that faster progress could be made in Year 7.
- improved status / profile of languages at KS3.

Those who thought there had not been a positive impact commented in particular on:

- the lack of consistency in what is taught at KS2 and differing levels of knowledge and experience among Year 7 entrants.
- the lack of proper teaching at KS2: no formal scheme of work, non-specialist teachers, only very basic vocabulary learning
- the fact that schools were not able to capitalise on previous experience because different languages are offered at KS3 to those at KS2.

However, survey 2 reveals that the perceived level of impact of KS2 language learning on the profile of Year 7 learners is relatively low, with a high proportion (71.8 per cent) reporting *no* impact (14.0 per cent) or *a little* impact (57.8 per cent). Only 20.6 per cent of the survey 2 respondents reported *quite a lot* (18.5 per cent) or *a lot* (2.1 per cent) of impact, and as discussed earlier in the report, they were in schools where there was likely to have been liaison with the primary feeder schools.

Profile of the learners

Respondents (n=298) to a further question on the nature of the impact of KS2 languages on the profile of Year 7 learners, where it was felt, reported that pupils had more knowledge of basic vocabulary and phrases (78.5 per cent), were more confident (65.1 per cent) and more motivated (41.3 per cent). In addition to this, 30.2 per cent of respondents reported improved cultural awareness among learners. Impact on learners' grammatical knowledge and pronunciation was perceived to be lower (15.1 per cent and 22.5 per cent of respondents respectively).

Relatively few respondents (16.4 per cent) reported a negative impact on the profile of Year 7 learners, with most comments relating to the motivation and confidence of pupils.

Examples of comments included:

- Pupils' negative experiences at KS2 led to them being disillusioned at KS3.
- Pupils already thought that languages were too hard and they were no good at the subject.
- Pupils entering Year 7 were already bored with what used to be a new and fun subject for them at KS3.
- Pupils with no experience of KS2 languages felt disadvantaged in Year 7.

Other comments related to the wide variety in pupils' experiences which made it difficult to teach in Year 7 and to the fact that pupils had been taught badly and had learnt mistakes which were hard to correct, particularly in pronunciation and grammar.

Most pupils who had learnt a language at primary school said that it had helped them when they started secondary school. It had prepared them for language learning at KS3 and given them a basic knowledge of the language on which they could build, as these pupils explained:

*It helped me cos I felt a bit more confident starting off.
(Boy, focus group case study round 1)*

I learnt French at junior school. It helped a lot. If the teacher said something like instructions I could understand it. (Boy, focus group case study round 1)

Some pupils, however, were less positive about their primary experience, as these comments show:

*We did little bits of it. When we came in the morning, we used to say, 'Guten Tag' and stuff like that We just said it. We didn't know what it meant.
(Year 8 boy, case study round 1)*

I think because she missed a lot of lessons it was just sort of hard to keep on reminding... And we didn't really have a book to look back on so it was like sheets that you'd lose and stuff. From my experience I think it's a bit of a waste of time. (Year 8 boy, case study round 1)

There were mixed views from a few pupils who had not learnt languages at primary school: some said that they would have had a head start if they had been given the opportunity to learn languages at primary level; others said that it had not been a problem and that they had quickly caught up:

*I found that not doing the language at primary really made me fall back cos we were doing some hard stuff but I didn't know the basics very much cos we only did a bit of the basics but other people knew them so we had to move on. But I've seemed to get the gist of it and I'm in top set now.
(Girl, focus group case study round 1)*

*Other people had done languages but in their old school I don't think they'd learnt as much. It would be easier if I'd done it as well but it wouldn't really make a difference. They'd only done simple French.
(Year 8 boy, case study round 1)*

It is interesting to note that, when pupils were asked whether they had had any difficulties when they started learning languages at secondary school, very few made reference to the fact that they had not done a language before. The main problems they did mention related to learning and retaining new vocabulary, and pronunciation, but many commented that it had become easier over time. Pupils in one focus group in particular also discussed the difficulties they had had in a language class where some pupils had done languages at KS2 and the rest had not, as these pupils explained:

*They don't really know how far you got in the primary school so they take you back to what you actually know already because all primary schools do different things so it was quite annoying because we did hardly any but we still knew most of the stuff that they began with. It just got really boring and I didn't really look forward to my French lessons because I knew it all.
(Year 8 boy, focus group case study round 1)*

*There were lessons where I'd be sitting there because I knew it and the teacher was helping people who hadn't done any French at all.
(Year 8 girl, focus group case study round 1)*

KS3 curriculum and methodology

A few teachers in the case study schools reported a shift in their KS3 methodology in the light of the KS2 languages experience of their pupils. One teacher described not only widening the vocabulary introduced but also focusing more on grammatical points:

So when you come to what would otherwise have been a new topic [...] for example 'animals', they know their animals inside out. [...] Instead of introducing them you're revising them, seeing what they know and encouraging them to add more, to learn more, to do different ones. [...] Whereas before we would be doing 'chien', 'chat', all that... It's more doing it, but then looking at 'le' and 'la' and 'un' and 'une'. So it's looking at it from a different angle or an additional angle. (Teacher, case study round 1)

However, there was little evidence from the qualitative data overall that the methodology of KS3 teaching is being affected by the introduction of language teaching in primary schools, echoing earlier findings by Muijs *et al* (2005) and Ofsted (2005). This is not surprising in the light of the findings referred to above regarding the generally poor level of knowledge between the two sectors about what each is doing in relation to foreign language teaching. There were very few occasions in the interviews when heads of department were able to consciously report on ways in which their department's teaching methodology at KS3 had been modified in order to take account of KS2 language learning and most teachers reported that the pupils' language learning at KS2 had little or no impact on their teaching at KS3. There was an awareness, however, that change will be needed at KS3 as language learning becomes embedded in KS2.

The questionnaire findings also supported the view that overall the perceived level of impact of KS2 language learning on the Year 7 curriculum is and remains low. The majority of respondents in both years (84.5 per cent survey 1 and 79.7 per cent in survey 2) reported there to be *no* or a *little* impact. As Table 4.2 shows, heads of department responding in survey 2 perceive the impact of language learning at KS2 to be only marginally greater than that reported in survey 1:

Table 5.3: Percentage of heads of department reporting an impact of KS2 language learning on the Year 7 curriculum (data from heads of department responding in both years only)

	% of heads of department	
	Q1 2006 (n=389)	Q2 2007 (n=389)
None	38.5	24.9
A little	46.0	54.8
Quite a lot	7.7	14.1
A lot	3.9	4.4
Don't know	2.9	1.8
No. of respondents to item	382	389

When asked about the nature of the impact on the Year 7 curriculum, in both years the main areas of impact were perceived to be increased range of ability and therefore need for differentiation within the same class and changes to schemes of work. Of those who commented on impact (64.3 per cent of the sample), 62.4 per cent of respondents reported more in-class differentiation needed for pupils at different levels in the same class, and 42.0 per cent reported that Year 7 schemes of work had been adapted to take account of KS2 learning (a rise in survey 2 on the 18.5 who said they had done so survey 1 in response to an open question). In survey 1, the most frequent comment (48.9 per cent) in relation to perceived impact on pupil language learning was that the Year 7 pupils arrived with knowledge of some basic vocabulary and phrases, that the pupils had increased confidence in language learning (24.7 per cent) and that they had increased motivation to learn languages at Year 7 (20.3 per cent). Relatively few respondents commented that a greater 7 (6.8 per cent), that pupils were grouped earlier according to the level of language skills (13.2 per cent) or grouped according to the language they studied in at KS2 (5.6 per cent).

Use of the KS2 Framework

In order to discover whether teachers were drawing on key policy documents to support their planning for progression, the questionnaires explored the extent to which heads of department were familiar with and made use of the KS2 Framework for languages. In survey 1 222 respondents (in the core sample of 389) said that they had used it for informing planning, for information on primary languages teaching or for both, 35 said that they did not find it relevant and 125 said they had not yet seen the document. In response to a similar question in second year questionnaire, a total of 279 heads of department said they had seen or used the KS2 Framework. Whilst the two sets of responses cannot be compared directly owing to differences in the wording of the questions, it is possible to infer a marginal increase in the number of heads of department who appear to be familiar with the KS2 Framework in survey 2.

5.9 Supporting language teaching in primary schools

About half the teachers interviewed were involved in delivering KS2 languages in very varied ways, with a slight increase in involvement in round 2 of the case studies. These included delivering taster sessions; teaching weekly lessons in primary schools; inviting gifted and talented KS2 pupils to weekly lessons in the secondary school; and working with primary colleagues to help them develop language and language teaching skills. The secondary teachers involved reported enjoying their involvement with KS2 languages. A number of the teachers currently not involved would welcome the opportunity to contribute and see this as a means of facilitating continuity in learning and language diversity:

What I would like to do, though, is to go into the primary schools and teach. I don't see why we can't. I mean, particularly in this area where we are a community and all the feeder schools come here, why can't we go out for a day and teach? ... I think it would be great. And then you've got the continuity. You've not just got French being taught. You've got all manner of languages being taught. (Teacher, case study round 1)

Survey 1 confirmed this desire for increased liaison between the sectors with 79.6 per cent of heads of department saying that they thought that increased liaison with their feeder primary schools was definitely desirable.

At a language college, one of the most proactive case study schools in terms of liaison with feeder primaries, there was strong support provided for the delivery of foreign languages in primaries. This includes a range of action from training the primary teachers to timetabled weekly teaching of Year 6 classes. At another of the case study schools, though not a language college, the head of department explained that the rationale behind her decision to teach languages to Year 5 classes instead of Year 6 was one of a 'marketing exercise' to encourage children to consider coming to her school rather than the local language college even if they were interested in pursuing languages.

Another school in the sample also targeted Year 5s, this time inviting them in from all feeder schools for taster mornings in order to instil motivation in language learning:

We teach them games, sing a song, take them to the computer room, do a bit of computers, give them squash and biscuits and off they go, toddle quite happy. So here is an awful lot of good practice, an awful lot of links because there is this language college and because there is this group, this hub that we belong to. (Head of department, case study round 1)

At a different non-specialist case study school, more focused pedagogical thinking had gone into the approach that the head of department had used in her three years of teaching at one of her feeder primaries. Her approach was based around the objectives of the literacy strategy:

I just had the instinctive idea that it had to be based on literacy, oracy, knowledge about languages, things that were going on in the literacy strategy at the moment and things that would give them the skills necessary to learn languages. And that's basically how the KS2 Framework has developed [...] I knew that what I must not do was ever be tempted to use resources that they might find when they came to this school. (Head of department, case study round 1)

This head of department was also running 'road shows' in her free time both at her school and at local primaries in order to attract more pupils to her school. Another way in which pedagogical support has been implemented is through the production of CDs. As mentioned earlier, one school took Year 9 pupils into primary schools to help with the languages teaching. Another school was planning to do the same with Year 10 pupils.

Headteachers of language colleges were aware of and supportive of work with the primary schools, with secondary staff visiting the primaries to teach or support the teaching of languages. The effectiveness with which this could be achieved was again dependent on the number of primary feeders *i.e.* the smaller the number the more effective liaison between the two sectors could be.

Funding was raised as the main issue militating against even closer cooperation between the sectors, with several headteachers reporting that they were unable for financial reasons to send teachers either to teach in primaries or find out what they were doing. However, several headteachers of non-language colleges had found ways to support language learning in the feeder primaries, either directly by freeing up secondary staff to go and deliver in some schools or through joint work with the local language college. This had been felt to have strengthened relationships between the two sectors: *'It's helped us build stronger links with our own feeder primary schools.'* Other teachers reported frustration though, wanting to go out and teach in the feeders but being thwarted due to lack of funding.

On the whole there was a sense that work with KS2 languages is more embedded: *'Last year we got it going and it was sort of working and it's kind of firmly embedded as part of what we do now, rather than just being some sort of bolt-on.'*

In one case a headteacher noted some raising of the schools' profile from working with primaries:

And from the whole school perspective, the school had quite a dire reputation amongst the primary schools and it's enabled us to build that thing that the high school's here to help them with the things that you want to deliver.'
(Headteacher, case study round 2)

5.10 Opportunities for mutual learning

Though there was no evidence of widespread or fundamental shift in foreign language pedagogy at KS3 as a result of the introduction of primary languages, there were indications of the sorts of changes that might take place with time. Secondary teachers who had experience of teaching at KS2 were keen to integrate aspects of primary methodology in the future *e.g.* sound/spelling link, a more kinaesthetic approach, the use of song and in particular stories:

One thing that I have seen that they do, that they're doing in primary, that I think is lovely, which we've only used in a very, very minor way, is when they've used the stories, I think that's been lovely.
(Head of department, case study round 2)

In round 2, there seemed in the case study interviews to be more understanding of the strengths of primary pedagogy:

I think it's because they've got different skills in primary. They've learnt differently... They've got this integrated way of communicating with them, as I say, gestures with concepts that are very difficult to understand, for example the split negative. For English boys it's very difficult to understand so they've got

this gesture where they cross their hands on their chest for 'ne' and they uncross their hands for the verb and they cross again for 'pas'. I don't think I would have come up with things like that yet they're completely used to them. They don't realize they're doing it. So I do think that they've got a very intelligent way of interpreting grammar in a way that the boys can understand.
(Head of department, case study round 1)

There was evidence of a slight increase in belief in the potential for mutual learning between language teachers in the two sectors. This belief seemed to be based on the secondary teachers' recent experience of working with their primary partners; where no such collaboration took place the teachers' views remained sceptical over the two years of the study. The ten heads of department and teachers who said that the secondary staff can learn from their primary partners identified a range of ways in which this was possible:

- One department had spent a day teaching classes of pupils from Year 3 through to Year 6 at a feeder primary. This had the effect of eliciting new insights into teaching methodology for the secondary teachers: *'I think that most important is that primary schools will teach in a different way to high school and I think that we can learn just as much from them as we can teach them. We might be able to teach them subject knowledge but they can teach us techniques that we might not necessarily have thought of using within our school. [...] And I think that now we have this partnership with primary schools whereas we didn't before.'*
- A teacher in the second round of case study reported observing novel approaches to vocabulary building: *'I observed a video where children were building, they were demonstrating their responses to questions by the way they were building bricks and colours. It was very kinaesthetic and very visual at the same time and the teacher could see people's answers.'*
- One head of department referred to the benefit of the primary methodology in terms of pupils' everyday exposure to the language through intensive contact with the regular class teacher.
- Another head of department referred to the greater amount of variety that was evident in the primary lesson and that this was worth emulating at KS3.

5.11 Future development

It would seem from the qualitative data that currently there is some disparity in the extent to which secondary schools have a clear plan about incorporating reflection about KS2 languages in the development of their department. Some headteachers were very clear about the direction in which they envisaged KS2 to KS3 developing. One headteacher, who saw the process as bottom-up, rather than secondary-led top down, emphasised the need to *'provide continuity by being responsive in terms of our curriculum and the only way to do that is to bridge the gap by having Year 6 and Year 7 language links.'*

There were some plans amongst several headteachers for more outreach work by secondary staff and for joint professional development initiatives for secondary and primary staff, as well as moving towards supporting primary teachers to deliver the languages curriculum more independently, resourcing remaining a major concern for a number of headteachers. Five schools, mainly SLCs, who had been delivering KS2 languages, were now looking to support KS2 teachers to do so, but as one head of department pointed out there were fears that *'that will be seen as taking away a precious resource rather than encouraging innovation'*.

Generally, however, headteachers were not confident in identifying the direction in which their planning for development of KS2/KS3 provision would move. A number were honest in saying that they didn't really know how things would develop over the next few years: *'I don't know. Honestly, I've given up trying to have a crystal ball on anything the government does because the experience is that it changes in two years.'*

Only one headteacher mentioned Local Authority (LA)/borough level planning, where schools in the various sectors might work with other bodies to try to develop consistency.

As to the views of heads of department, in response to an open ended question in survey 2 which asked what would need to happen for language learning at KS3 to benefit fully from the KS2 languages initiative, over half of the responding heads of department in survey 2 (57.8 per cent) commented on issues relating to KS2 (the curriculum, the quality of teaching, and the choice of language). For KS2, heads of department pointed in particular to the following areas for improvement:

- There needs to be more consistency and a more cohesive approach across KS2: teachers should be following the same schemes of work and covering the same topics, and all primary schools should be teaching the same amount.
- There should be more specialist teachers at KS2 and greater opportunities for training in language skills and language teaching methodology.
- All primaries should teach the same language.
- Primaries should teach the language that is offered at KS3.

A further 28.1 per cent commented on issues relating to liaison and transition, in particular that:

- There should be more liaison between KS2 and KS3 staff, including cross-sector teaching and training.
- More information should be available on pupils' language learning experiences at KS2.
- There should be a curriculum which bridges the two key stages. KS3 should build on KS2.

Relatively few respondents (11.6 per cent) mentioned issues to be addressed at KS3, and where they did, comments were mainly on the need for appropriate course books and schemes of work.

The extent to which a secondary school has been already involved in primary liaison and teaching seems to determine the sort of priorities they identify (if at all) in their development plans. The following lists are collated from the priorities for future development reported in interviews with heads of department

At schools with low level of experience so far:

- build up links
- talk to the school leadership team about the initiative
- send out questionnaires to feeder primaries to get a bigger picture
- invite feeders to send representatives to visit the secondary school
- waiting for LA advisor to bring the schools together
- would like to participate at whole borough level.

At schools with a good current level of experience:

- develop an early entry system
- develop bilingual groups
- take Year 9 pupils into Year 6 (in collaboration with local language college)
- work with primaries on the Language Ladder and KS3 Framework for Languages to agree progression and skills focus
- revisit the audits and scheme of work
- run a language summer school.

6 The status of languages and the impact of Specialist Languages Colleges

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section considers the current status of languages in KS3 as identified in interviews with headteachers, heads of department, teachers and pupils in the case study schools. The second section deals with the impact of the specialist language college initiative on language provision in KS3 in both SLCs and non-SLCs.

6.1 Key Findings

Headteachers, teachers, HoDs and pupils interviewed in the case study schools agreed that languages generally enjoyed a relatively high status in their schools. Headteachers tended to define the status of languages in their schools in terms of the subject's position on the timetable. The pupils, too, judged the status of languages in their school mainly through whether or not it was a 'core' subject and the amount of time allocated to languages on the timetable.

Languages were generally considered by the majority of pupils to be an important subject at Key Stage 3 (KS3), ranking second only to the core subjects, maths, English and science, and with the main indicators of importance associated with the resources allocated to the subject and the profile of the languages department within the school. Personal reasons for considering the subject important related mainly to whether pupils would use them in later life, for recreational or vocational purposes.

Heads of department in SLCs reported that the gaining of specialist status had a strong positive impact on the development of the languages departments at these schools. Half of the SLCs responding to the first survey stated that the impact was very strong and over a third said it was quite strong, and this was similar in the second survey. The longer the duration of SLC status, the stronger the reported impact.

The most commonly reported areas of strong impact in the second survey were in: liaison with KS2 (68 per cent); the use of ICT (61 per cent); provision of resources more generally (60 per cent); uptake at KS4 (54 per cent); and diversity of languages offered at the school (53 per cent). At classroom level there was much less perceived impact on pedagogy. Improved links with industry were not noted.

There appeared to be a relatively low level of impact of the work of Specialist Language Colleges on that of other secondary schools more generally. Just under half of the non-SLC schools in both years of the survey had had no contact with an SLC, and those that did have contact reported it mainly to be only a little. The most commonly cited reasons for absence of contact were: lack of communication, geographical distance, or doubts over usefulness of the contact. In the second survey, of those heads of department who had had contact with an SLC in the intervening year, 39 per cent (n=76) reported it to have had no impact on their department and 46 per cent (n=90) reported only a little impact.

In the survey, both heads of department in SLCs and non-SLCs were in agreement that the role of SLCs was: to promote the status of languages in school and beyond (94 per cent); to develop innovative teaching (90 per cent); to support other secondary schools in the area (85 per cent); to support provision of languages in primary schools (85 per cent); to support modern foreign languages teaching nationally (75 per cent); to be involved in the training of languages teachers (67 per cent). In an open question about the role for SLCs in the future, 95 per cent respondent heads of department from non-SLCs referred to the desirability of SLCs providing support for other schools. In contrast, only about half of the heads of department of SLCs who responded to this question identified supporting other secondary schools as their role.

6.2 The status of languages

6.2.1 Current status of languages

In discussing the status enjoyed by languages in their schools in the first round of case study interviews, headteachers, teachers, heads of department and pupils were agreed that languages generally enjoyed a relatively high status in their schools. In the majority of schools in the sample, languages were said by headteachers to enjoy high status; in many this was a relatively recent development, and was reported as having been led by a strong and recently appointed head of department:

But now actually I see it as one of the lead departments in the school, not just in terms of attainment but in terms of quality of the teaching that goes on, the quality of organisation in the department and the vision of where they want to go with the subject. (Headteacher, case study round 1)

Headteachers referred to a number of different factors that can contribute to the 'status' of the subject. They tended to define the 'profile' of languages in their school mainly through reference to their presence on the timetable, for example: *'Languages has got a high profile in this school. At KS3 it's allocated three periods of curriculum per year group and staffed very generously.'* Other factors referred to included: the strength of the department; facilities (particularly technology); financial support; results; internationalism, and success in terms of uptake when non-compulsory post-KS3.

As far as the pupils' views of the status of languages was concerned, the majority of the headteachers were confident that pupils were generally very favourable to the study of languages in their schools and were responding to the good teaching going on in the department. Again the idea came across that this was improving. Several headteachers spoke of the methodology now being used as helping to engage the learners better:

And I think the atmosphere in the lessons, the behaviour in the lessons, they're sort of engaged with what we've got on offer. It's 100 per cent better than it was. (Headteacher, case study round 1)

In one of the language colleges the headteacher spoke of the 'cachet' attached to languages, particularly among able pupils. Interestingly however, of the three headteachers who suggested that the pupils' attitudes to languages were fairly mixed in their schools, two were from Languages Colleges. Generally, they felt that opinions towards languages were more favourable in the lower school, suggesting that the requirement to continue with a language in KS4 as a result of language college designation was an issue for a number of pupils.

The teachers in most of the case study schools described the pupils' views about languages as positive and this was reiterated in the second round of interviews. A few schools indicated that there had been an improvement in perceptions, with different factors tentatively identified in each case. One head of languages referred to the powerful impact of 'pupil talk'; that is, pupils sharing positive experiences of language learning. He also described how increasing numbers at KS4 had raised the status of languages among KS3 pupils. This process of peer influence seems to have been aided by the existence of a vertical tutor group system in the school which facilitated dialogue across year groups. Two other schools saw improved status of languages in the eyes of the pupils as resulting from the primary languages experience: *'as pupils come up from KS2 I think their perceptions of languages are really good.'*

The views of the heads of department and headteachers were in general confirmed by the pupils in the case study interviews. When asked about the status of the subject in their school, very few pupils thought that languages were not very important, with the majority saying that languages were quite an important subject, though not as important as the core subjects, English, maths and science. Interestingly, a number of factors identified by the pupils as indications of the importance of the subject in their school reflected those of the headteachers. They too focused their answers mainly on the amount of time allocated to languages. Where pupils perceived that languages had been allocated a large chunk of curriculum time, they perceived the subject's importance to be correspondingly high:

Well, it's not as important as like English and maths, but it's like compared to all the others it's important. Cos you get it more times a week than any other subjects. (Year 8 boy, case study round 1)

Equally where languages were perceived as having less curriculum time, their status diminished:

I would say that it's not heavily focused on; it's not seen like an important subject because teachers don't seem to focus on it a lot and we haven't got many lessons compared to other subjects. (Year 8 girl, case study round 1)

Other indicators mentioned by the pupils included the fact that many pupils were studying languages, the availability of good teachers, languages displays and enrichment days. Pupils in language colleges also said that the subject was important in their school because of its specialist status:

I think it is quite important to do in this school... because this school is like a languages college. It is quite important. (Year 8 boy case study round 1)

When pupils were asked why languages were an important subject in general and for them personally, they expressed a variety of views, most of them positive. Nearly three quarters of pupils interviewed individually and pupils in all the focus groups expressed the view that languages were important for travelling and meeting people. Many pupils expressed this as a need for language for personal communication purposes, dealing with different transactional situations abroad, meeting new people or maintaining contact with existing contacts and relatives abroad:

If you ever go away or something you need to know how to communicate because otherwise you're not going to be able to talk to anyone unless they can speak your language. (Year 8 boy, case study round 1)

The second reason why pupils considered languages to be important was that it would help with jobs and future careers. A third of pupils interviewed individually and nearly all the focus groups explained that languages would improve university and career prospects, and give them a wider and better choice of jobs. Languages were also seen as important for jobs abroad. A few pupils commented that languages would help them with other languages and subjects, and that some languages were more important than others because they were more widely spoken or the country was nearer. The point that languages helped them to understand about the culture of different countries was also raised:

I think it's good to learn a language too, so when you go to another country, you can speak their language and you understand more about how they live, the language they use, the way they talk to each other and use different words and stuff. (Year 8 girl, case study round 1)

Finally, languages were seen to be important personally because it was an enjoyable subject: *'I'd say I quite enjoy it, so I see it as an important subject.'*
(Year 8 girl, case study round 1)

6.2.2 Views of governors and parents on the status of language

Headteachers were asked what they perceived to be the views of the key stakeholders in their schools as to the status of languages in the school. They felt their school governors to be generally supportive of languages:

I think they've got the same sort of view that I've got, that it's a crucial skill for the future and wellbeing of this country. If you're talking about the global economy and making our kids useful citizens and soundly economic futures for them [sic], the Every Child Matters agenda, languages has got to be a crucial element of that. (Headteacher, case study round 1)

Where languages were non-compulsory, headteachers reported that governors were keen to strengthen the position of languages as much as possible despite its optional status: *'They support a broad and balanced education. We're committed to that and see languages as playing a vital role.'*

As far as parents' views about language learning in their schools were concerned, over half the headteachers admitted honestly that they did not really know: *'That's an interesting one. I don't know is the short answer.'* Many headteachers felt that parents were happy where languages departments were showing signs of improvement.

Some said that they had had no complaints, or used the fact of strong uptake at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) as evidence of parental support for the subject. Most headteachers, with the exception of one headteacher of a language college who reported that the parents were very supportive of languages, went on to say that they had the impression that there was a variety of views:

There are two camps really. There are those that aren't interested and can't see the point and say 'Can't you concentrate on English?' And there are those who see languages as integral to being part of Europe and believing that it will be an advantage in whatever their children want to do once they move on. So it's aspiring middle classes and some people whose minds are less aspiring. (Headteacher, case study round 1)

In both years of the case study, the teachers also reported that parents' views of languages were mixed. In a few schools in the sample, there was some suggestion of a change in the parents' views overall in round 2, though with different possible explanations. One teacher thought that the shift in views was due to awareness of the primary languages initiative:

I think there is a shift because of just the feeling that it is happening in primary schools, and I've noticed slightly more in the news the fact that they say, 'it's now being taught in primary schools', and there's that kind of frisson of, 'ooh - might we become language learners as a nation?' - so I think that is one of the things, so not particularly effective in terms of what's going on in our school, but it's just more that globally people know that things are changing. That the government are putting languages a little bit more high status so people are thinking, oh, might my child be learning languages from such a young age, and therefore things might change that way round. (Teacher, case study round 2)

A teacher in another school felt that the explanation for the improved status in the eyes of parents at their school was due to the school's collaboration with other high schools in the locality on foreign language teaching and learning. A head of languages in another school in the sample saw the determining factor as mainly internal to the school itself: namely, the efforts of departmental staff in maintaining a high level communication with parents, thereby ensuring that languages were forefront in their consciousness of the work of the school:

*I think it's stayed high. As high as it can be. I mean, we do a lot of marketing and we do keep up contact with parents via mail and we inform them about how their kids are doing and send out lots of certificates when we can and praise letters and we will send out advice letters, we think your child shows good GCSE potential or shows the ability to work well with a language at GCSE and I think that helps.
(Head of department, case study round 2)*

The theme of promotional activities as a way of enhancing parents' appreciation of the importance of foreign language learning was echoed by a teacher at another school who referred to their school's recent Ofsted report that identified parents' lack of knowledge of the learning going on in school as a weakness.

A head of languages at a case study school with a high proportion of ethnic minority pupils reported that Asian parents in their school were 'much better informed' and keen for their children to study languages even if the children were not so keen:

I would say they're much more European. And I would say they're far more for it than the children are. (Head of department, case study round 2)

6.2.3 The global context and the status of languages

Several headteachers and teachers referred to the problems faced by languages when their schools lay in catchment areas that were monocultural as it made it more difficult to convince pupils of the value of languages:

It's not a community that's very mixed in any way. They're all pretty similar and they're not open to other cultures. So when someone comes from abroad we do use them to kind of promote languages and to say, this person who you are with, where do they come from? And to try and get them to be a bit more curious and less reluctant to accept them. (Headteacher, case study round 2)

Where schools had pupils from more diverse ethnic backgrounds, several heads in schools mentioned the benefits of this both for underscoring the importance of languages and for developing the pupils' intercultural understanding. It was felt that valuing pupils' home languages both supported the status of languages generally and might ensure a more harmonious school community:

*And again it's part of the way in which you try and develop people's sort of awareness of languages by valuing what we've got in the school. Most of our bilingual learners are fluent in two languages which gives them a leg up over me for a start.
(Headteacher, case study round 2)*

The head of a school in a community where there has been increase of Polish people also described this as having a positive impact on the status of languages in the school:

Our own 89 per cent White/British school population is becoming increasingly aware of young people from different cultures and backgrounds speaking different languages, and that is excellent, that is what we need, particularly where we are in this particular town ... and getting youngsters to see how important it is to be able to communicate in different languages, the fact that this migration of population across Europe has happened. It's an eye-opener for our youngsters that will I think reinforce the importance for them, even if they don't realise it, the ability to have a facility in language. (Headteacher, case study round 2)

In schools where there was a substantial number of EAL pupils at the school, the languages staff believed that their presence contributed to the raising of the status of languages as a whole in the school ('the other pupils respect it, see it as a strength'). There were different ways in which this was perceived.

- EAL pupils were role models for the other pupils in that they demonstrated how it is possible to learn a second language fairly quickly, going from practically no knowledge at all to a good level of fluency, by living in the country.
- EAL pupils' presence in the classroom allowed for meaningful and personalized discussion of diversity of languages and stimulated reflection around language awareness issues.
- EAL pupils' presence gave rise to greater intercultural awareness of all pupils.
- By being much less reliant on English in languages lessons, teachers felt EAL pupils were able to contribute to target language use as a means of communication in the classroom.

Conversely, and perhaps unsurprisingly, case study schools which had very low numbers of EAL pupils reported that EAL did not have an impact on raising the status of languages in the school and there was little awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity amongst the pupils and little initiative among staff to develop this awareness.

The promotion of 'internationalism' was mentioned by some headteachers and heads of department as a strategy for strengthening the status of languages:

... It's about tolerance and understanding and it's about respecting other cultures. It's about not feeling that English predominates throughout the world. It's about a willingness to communicate in a way that is not superior and it's about understanding the context of the global community. (headteacher, case study round 2)

At another school, the deputy head attributed the need to educate learners about their place in a wider world community as contributing to the decision to bid for a second specialism in languages:

I think that because we have to prepare our youngsters to live, you know, in a much more international environment, although it would be tempting to drop languages at KS4 and go for subjects that would get us higher in the league tables, I take the view that we still have a commitment to a broad and balanced education for our youngsters and languages is a vital part of that. (Deputy headteacher, case study round 1)

However, one head noted that pupils' interest in other cultures did not always include a language dimension:

*There's still a disjunction between students' interest in other countries ... - they very often wish to visit those countries - and their apparent lack of enthusiasm to be able to communicate in the language of the country they're visiting.
(Headteacher case study round 2)*

In several schools the languages department was seen to contribute significantly to the school's international profile particularly through trips and e-mail links. Several headteachers saw the languages departments playing a key role in supporting other departments to develop an international dimension to their work. Some heads of languages saw the promotion of internationalism in their school exclusively based on the trips, exchanges and links that they had established in support of the teaching of the foreign languages on the timetable. Other teachers had a broader and more integrated vision of their role in the promotion of internationalism in their school, for example, developing links and exchanges with a wider range of countries (in particular China where four case study schools had forged links) or beginning to share ideas between mathematics departments in schools in England and abroad. Others developed cross-curricular links between foreign language learning and another subject. This was evident in a number of the schools, and the most widely reported links were with history, geography, music and science, with some languages departments seeing their role as providing the language dimension to trips organised by other departments (such as geography and history).

One head of department described an exchange with a school in Kenya where the PE and language teachers were working together so the English pupils could learn enough Swahili to teach handball to their Kenyan peers. The same teacher spoke of the way her department provided advice and shared their expertise with the school international co-ordinator on whole school international initiatives.

6.2.4 Change in status

In general, little perceived change in the status of languages was reported by case study participants over the two years of the project. However, where headteachers did report developments which they perceived as raising the profile of languages in the school, these were mainly: increased working with KS2 (five heads); the introduction of new courses (GCSE, Asset, CBLIC, VIPS and Language Leaders) in KS3 (four schools); increased international links (four heads); increasing the range of languages taught (three heads); improved GCSE results (three heads); the employment of cover supervisors with responsibilities in the languages department (two heads). Individual heads also mentioned the following: work towards integrating language learning into the KS4 vocational route; increasing the number of FLAs in the school; improved management of GCSE entries in pupils' first languages; twilight classes to increase KS4 uptake; trips; staff training led by the languages dept; the appointment of the director of languages to assistant head; and particularly positive feedback about languages provision from Ofsted. Three heads believed that the profile of the languages department had been raised beyond the school through: a wider sharing of experience of the Language Leaders scheme (one school), contributing to the development of KS2 language teaching (one school); and outreach work with other schools (one school, a SLC). Developments which heads perceived as having a negative impact on the status of languages included: changes in staffing (three heads); an unsuccessful attempt to accelerate an application for SLC status (one head); Ofsted imposing a notice to improve which entailed a suspension of SLC status (one head); the increased range of options at KS4 impacting negatively on uptake of languages (one head); and the perceived mixed messages from government regarding the importance of language learning (one head).

When referring to positive factors impacting on status, heads of department often mentioned support from Senior Management, who by avoiding staff reduction and by maintaining the number of lessons per week on the timetable protected the profile of languages. Other references to positive influences on status included a successful Ofsted inspection '*which raised the profile of languages among staff and pupils*'; the introduction of Spanish on the curriculum; and the introduction of Asset languages. Factors diminishing the status of the subject in the school were primarily structural issues such as staff reduction and timetabling issues.

6.3 The impact of Specialist Languages Colleges

6.3.1 Impact of school specialist status on the status of languages

The award of specialist status, languages or otherwise, was felt by headteachers to have a real impact across the school on the status of languages.

In language colleges the designation itself was felt to accord status by elevating languages to the core curriculum. This was all the more true where the designation was well embedded, as one headteacher commented: '*I think language has a very high status because of our language designation.*'

Heads of department in SLCs in both rounds of the case studies confirmed that specialist status impacted on the whole positively on languages at the school. In round 2 of the case studies one language college reported that the process of re-designation seemed to involve a redistribution of the school's attention to other subject areas, while maintaining existing levels of support and initiative for languages.

In some cases where schools were not language colleges, but had another specialist status, the impact was reported to be felt across the school and into languages: for example, one teacher commented: '*The general ethos of being a Specialist Sports College permeates everything.*'

Headteachers reported that the main way in which this could be felt were in improved resources and facilities available for all, particularly Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities:

And then my senior team and I worked damn hard to ensure that that first tranche of funding that came in actually benefited as many subjects outside business, ICT and geography, which are our lead specialisms, as possible, so language immediately picked up a set of wireless laptops which they can use. We installed interactive whiteboards with the technology throughout the languages rooms which they can use, which has added the sparkle and zip to their teaching. (Headteacher, case study round 1)

Some impact of ICT on teaching and learning was noted as were improved staffing levels in some cases. Some headteachers also reported that pedagogy in the languages classroom was influenced to some degree (e.g. more drama in languages lessons as a result of Arts College status) but this was not widespread.

Heads of department in non-SLCs also confirmed that specialist status impacted on the whole positively on languages at the school. In schools with specialisms other than languages, the most common ways in which languages had benefited was through improved funding in the school generally, and in particular increased access to computers. One head of department reported that the status of the school had generally been raised after the award of Maths and Computing specialist status and this had made the school more attractive to potential year 7 pupils and their parents.

In terms of curricular and pedagogical development of languages, at two Sports Colleges, heads of department reported adopting practices initiated through the sports department. For example, the *'junior language leaders'* scheme was adopted in three schools. At an Arts College, the impact was one of encouraging collaborative work with the drama department, leading to plays in French acted by KS3 pupils. Finally, heads of department at single or dual specialism language colleges also pointed to positive impact of school status on their work. One head of department described it as a *'constant impact'*, with pressure from meeting targets arising from involvement in new initiatives: *'Although it's very hard work, we get a lot of privileges as well, like five of us work in primary schools [...] but we also deliver adult community lessons.'*

Most headteachers felt that the award of second specialism had had no impact on planning for languages provision beyond KS3, though two headteachers did admit that the requirement of studying the specialist subject at KS4 had squeezed the timetable and was one of the reasons for making languages non-compulsory beyond KS3, as will be discussed in section 6 of the report.

6.3.2 Impact of gaining specialist status on language colleges

The surveys contained separate sections addressing language colleges and non-language colleges on the perceived role and value that this initiative has had on KS3 MFL teaching and learning in school.

When asked about the extent of the impact of gaining language college status on the development of the languages department in questionnaire 1, 50 per cent (N=36) said the impact was 'very strong', 36.1 per cent (N=26) said it was 'quite strong' and 12.5 per cent (N= 9) said it had had 'a little impact'. In order to see whether there was a difference in the responses between those schools that had received their status recently and those who have had longer experience of specialist status, the responses from two subsets of this variable can be compared: schools who have had less than three years' specialist school experience, and those with three or more years. This shows that a larger percentage of experienced specialist schools described the impact as 'very strong' compared with those with less than three years' experience, suggesting that perceived impact develops with time.

In order to identify the specific areas of the impact, respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 0-3 (ranging from no impact to very strong impact) the degree to which this was felt in different aspects of departmental work. The highest scores for 'very strong impact' are listed below:

Table 6.1: How the impact of SLC status is felt in different aspects of departmental work

	2006	2007
Use of ICT	70.1%	61.4%
Liaison with KS2 MFL	64.3%	67.9%
Provision of resources	62.3%	60.3%
Diversity of languages offered'	57.6%	53.4%
Uptake at KS4	46.7%	54.5%

Resourcing seems to play a key role in perceived impact; ICT is implicated presumably as the result of improved provision of equipment as reported in section 6.3.1. Liaison with KS2 as part of outreach, as well as other general resourcing, both score highly. In terms of classroom practice and language learning outcomes there was much less perceived impact. The following factors did not score highly for 'very strong impact':

- grammar teaching (14.1 per cent in 2007 and 12.5 per cent in 2008)
- communicative language teaching (15.4 per cent in 2007 and 13 per cent in 2008)
- pupil engagement (13.4 per cent in 2007 and 15.8 per cent in 2008)

This is not to say that aspects of classroom pedagogy have not developed as a result of the award of SLC status, but that heads of department made no causal connection between the award and enhanced quality of teaching and learning.

With regard to broader departmental activity there was a low score for impact on links with industry (27 per cent said there was no impact in 2007 and 35.7 per cent in 2008) yet the specialist college initiative encourages the development of business links through, for example, its sponsorship requirement when bidding for status.

Comparing scores from new and older SLCs gives an indication of which areas of impact might grow with time and which seem to remain relatively unaffected regardless of time. Using the same definition of new language colleges (less than three years' status) and older language colleges (three years and above) both surveys highlight areas where the impact of specialist status was felt more strongly in the schools with longer language college experience: uptake at KS4, the diversity of languages offered, the professional development of MFL staff, use of ICT, the provision of resources and the development of community links.

Some of the case study heads of department also reported interesting new extracurricular activities involving languages since the award of specialist status, for instance via the Global Gateway, where schools forge international partnerships.

6.3.3 Impact of Specialist Language Colleges on other schools

Non-language colleges were asked to reply to questions concerning the amount and nature of contact they had had with language colleges and the extent of the impact of this contact on their own work. They were asked again a year later to reply to questions concerning the amount and nature of the contact they had had with SLCs in the past twelve months and the extent of the impact of this contact on their own work.

In survey 1 219 heads of department (41.2 per cent of the sample) and in survey 2 126 heads of department (39.3 per cent of the sample) said they had no contact with a language college and most of those who did have contact only had 'a little'. 'A lot' of contact was reported by only 4.3 per cent in survey 1 and 6.5 per cent in survey 2, with 10 per cent and 12.5 per cent respectively reporting 'quite a bit' of contact. Of the reasons given for the lack of contact, the most common were absence of a language college in their area (27.8 per cent), no contact offered by the language college (13.6 per cent), and there was no point in contact (10.5 per cent). Overall the range of explanations broadly falls under the headings of lack of communication, geographical distance, or doubts over usefulness of the contact. In both surveys the heads of department who reported contact with SLCs were asked about the nature of this contact. Most of these schools (70.9 per cent and 94.3 per cent respectively - increased over time) said they had contact with a language college local to their school. The following forms of contact with SLCs were most often reported:

- personal contact (49.6 per cent and 58.1 per cent)).
- training (36.2 per cent and 39.3 per cent)
- visits to or from the SLC (32.1 per cent and 37.5 per cent)
- conferences (21.5 per cent and 28.8 per cent).

In order to identify the specific areas of the impact from contact, survey 1 asked respondents to rate on a scale of 0-3 (ranging from no impact to very strong impact) the degree to which this was felt in different aspects of departmental work. The highest rating was for impact on ideas for use of ICT (17.7 per cent very strong impact, 22.8 per cent quite strong impact, and 27.8 per cent no impact), for ideas for extracurricular activities (10.6 per cent very strong impact, 18.5 per cent quite strong impact, 41.1 per cent no impact). Percentages for 'no impact' were highest for: range of languages offered (76.4 per cent); impact on ideas for teaching grammar (51 per cent); and for assessment ideas (47.9 per cent).

When asked in survey 1 what impact language colleges have had on the development of their department, 107 heads of department (35.2 per cent) who had had contact said there was 'no impact', while 52.1 per cent said there was 'a little impact'. In survey 2 when asked what impact SLCs have had on the development of their department, 76 heads of department (39.2 per cent) who had had contact in the intervening year reported that there was 'no impact' and 46.4 per cent reported 'a little positive impact'. Crosstabulating responses to this question with responses to frequency of contact with a language college indicates that the more contact there is the greater the reported impact. Of those who said there was no impact, 43.2 per cent in survey 1 and 88.2 per cent in survey 2 had had only a little contact, whereas there was only one school in survey 1 and 3 schools in survey 2 which had had 'a lot' of contact and yet reported no impact on the department.

6.3.4 Views of the role of language colleges

In survey 2 the heads of department of SLCs and schools without a specialism in languages were asked to indicate on a scale of 1-5 (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree) the degree to which they considered different spheres of activity to constitute the primary role of language colleges. Heads of department agreed or strongly agreed that the role of SLCs is as follows:

- to promote the status of languages in school and beyond (94.4 per cent)
- to develop innovative teaching (89.6 per cent)
- to support other secondary schools in the area (84.9 per cent)
- to support provision of languages in primary schools (85 per cent)
- to support MFL teaching nationally (75.1 per cent)
- to be involved in the training of languages teachers (66.6 per cent).

A crosstabulation of the views of the role of SLCs with the specialist status of the school showed that the views of heads of department from SLCs, heads of department from schools with specialisms other than languages and heads of department from non-specialist schools converged very closely in all areas, except for involvement in teacher training. 79.2 per cent of heads of department in SLCs agreed or strongly agreed that this was the role of SLCs compared with 64.3 per cent of heads of department from other schools.

In an open question heads of department were asked for their views on the role that language colleges should have in the future. 220 respondents answered this question. The most frequent comments were:

- support languages in local schools (68)
- improve the profile of languages (28)
- share good practice (27)
- model good practice (26)
- share resources with other schools (23)
- support languages teaching at KS2 (22)
- provide training for other schools (18)
- develop innovative languages teaching (15)
- support languages in the community (13)
- raise uptake (13)
- provide teaching in a wider range of languages (10).

However, there seems to be a mismatch between the future role heads of department would like SLCs to have and the relatively low level of contact currently experienced by non-SLC schools. The largest category of comments (192 out of 344) related to SLC support to other secondary schools. Of these 192 comments, 21 were made by heads of department of SLCs (40 of whom responded to the question) and 171 by heads of department in schools without specialist language status (180 of whom responded to the question). These data suggest that, overall, heads of department in SLCs and other schools view the role of SLCs differently.

A small number of respondents expressed concerns about SLCs. Eight expressed general disagreement with the principle of specialist schools and one head of department voiced the concern that SLCs would attract good linguists (teachers and pupils) away from other schools.

7 The impact of non-compulsory languages in KS4 on KS3

This chapter presents the findings relating to the effects on KS3 of the removal of compulsory languages from KS4. The status of languages in KS4 in participant schools is presented, including key stakeholders' views as to the desirability of languages for all in KS4. Later sections present findings relating to effects of the policy on learning and teaching in KS3, and how heads of department and headteachers encourage uptake beyond KS3.

7.1 Key Findings

KS4 languages uptake in the sample

Both surveys suggested languages were optional for all pupils in approximately two thirds of schools, which is line with findings from CILT's surveys (2005, 2008). In survey 1 (N = 612), 396 respondents (64.7% of total) said MFL was not compulsory at KS4, and 172 (28.1%) said it was compulsory for all or most pupils at their school. In survey 2 (N = 389), 251 respondents (64.5%) said MFL was not compulsory at KS4 and 103 (26.5%) said it was compulsory for all or most pupils at their school. Where schools operated a selective policy for compulsory language learning, it was usually applied exclusively to pupils in higher sets. However, the first survey suggested that there was little support (18 per cent of heads of department) for compulsory languages for *all* beyond KS3, a view confirmed by the case study interviews, but almost half of the survey respondents felt that it should be compulsory for *most* pupils. In the first round of case study interviews, reasons given by headteachers for making languages optional (which was the case in 12 of the 16 case study schools) were to do with offering choice, the belief that learners should enjoy what they were studying, the historically poor delivery of languages and poor pupil motivation in their schools.

46 per cent of heads of department in the survey reported some negative effects of the optional status of languages at KS4 on teaching and learning at KS3. The majority of comments related to pupils' attitudes, with 45 per cent of respondent heads of department noting earlier disaffection in KS3. Some case study schools were trying to offset this effect by introducing exam-oriented languages courses in Year 9, through fast-tracking or similar strategies.

Common strategies to encourage uptake

In the survey heads of department said they encouraged uptake by doing presentations and talks, including inviting external speakers (46 per cent), planning trips and visits in the UK and abroad (35 per cent), and by using promotional materials. One third said the main way they sought to encourage uptake was by teaching good lessons at KS3 and making the learning experience as interesting and enjoyable as possible for pupils. Enrichment activities such as languages events, theatre visits and languages clubs were mentioned by 21 per cent of respondents. Guidance at GCSE choice time, including the targeting of individual pupils and involving parents in the decision-making process via letters home, was mentioned by 16 per cent. Offering a variety of courses at KS4 was seen by 9 per cent of respondents as likely to promote the study of languages beyond KS3. However, figures for a question asking which courses were on offer in respondents' schools show that in fact the overwhelming majority offered just GCSE (81 per cent) at KS4.

It was clear from the case studies that departments were putting a lot of effort into promoting uptake in KS4. As well as some of the strategies used above some heads of department reported at interview that they used the following ways of encouraging pupils to continue with their studies beyond KS3: identifying and then 'nurturing' individual pupils whom they thought might enjoy and be good at languages; writing to parents; and using peer encouragement by having KS4 pupils talk to younger learners.

In the survey heads of department rated the benefits of language learning for pupils primarily in terms of personal and social gains, yet over three quarters of respondents said that in their discussions to promote languages with KS3 pupils their primary emphasis was on improved vocational prospects, suggesting a discrepancy between what they perceived as the true benefits and the arguments they put forward in discussions.

The pupils' views

The most frequently cited reasons given by the case study Year 8 pupils for and against continuing with language study related to the extent of their enjoyment of language lessons. Another common factor in the individual interviews was how highly they rated themselves as language learners and how good a grade they were likely to get at GCSE. On the other hand in the focus group interviews, slightly greater prominence was given to vocational reasons for uptake.

7.2 The compulsory status of languages at KS4

With the removal of languages from the core curriculum beyond KS3, heads of department were asked in both surveys whether languages were still compulsory in KS4 in their schools and, if so, for which groups they were compulsory and whether they thought languages should be compulsory for all pupils.

From the 2006 to the 2007 survey there was little change in the compulsory or optional status of languages at KS4 in the sample of schools. Heads of department reported that languages was compulsory for all or most pupils in 27.2 per cent of schools (30.5 per cent of the same schools in survey 1) and that it was an optional subject for all pupils in 66.2 per cent of the schools (66.0 per cent in survey 1). The most significant factor appeared to be whether a school has SLC status. Language learning was compulsory for all or most pupils in 97.1 per cent of SLCs and in 24.0 per cent of other schools, while language learning was optional for all pupils in 18.0 per cent of SLCs and in 75.5 per cent of other schools.

There was wide variation in the number of pupils taking a language in Year 10 and Year 11 in different schools as shown in the table below:

Table 7.1: Percentage of pupils learning a language in Year 10 and Year 11 (second survey)

Percent of pupils learning a language	No. of schools (Y10)	Percent of schools (Y10)	No. of schools (Y11)	Percent of schools (Y11)
None	5	1.4	6	1.6
1-25%	111	30.0	111	30.4
26-50%	107	28.9	98	26.8
51-75%	51	13.8	48	13.2
76-100%	96	25.9	102	27.9
Total	370	100.0	365	100.0
Missing	19		24	
Total	389		389	

The number of pupils taking a language in Year 10 and Year 11 was unsurprisingly closely related to whether language learning was compulsory or optional in the school. In 85.5 per cent schools where language learning was not compulsory, 50 per cent or fewer pupils choose to continue with a language at KS4. In 46.5 per cent of these schools, 25 per cent or fewer KS4 pupils studied a language.

As before, SLC status was an important factor, with over 75 per cent of pupils taking a language at KS4 in 82.8 per cent of SLCs and in only 15.8 per cent of other schools. Conversely, 25 per cent or fewer of the pupils took a language at KS4 in 37.7 per cent of schools without SLC status, while there were no SLCs where this is the case.

Crosstabulation of the number of pupils learning languages in Year 10 in 2007 and Government Office Region revealed considerable regional variation. In a relatively large number of schools in London and the South East, more than three quarters of the pupils were learning a language at KS4 (38.5 per cent of schools in London and 34.5 per cent of schools in the South East), whereas this was the case in only 12.8 per cent of schools in Yorkshire and the Humber and 17.5 per cent of schools in North West. On the other hand, in the North East and the West Midlands, there were particularly high numbers of schools in which 25 per cent or fewer of the pupils learn a language at KS4 (52.6 per cent of schools in the North East and 41.7 per cent of schools in the West Midlands). In London and the South West there were relatively few schools where this was the case (17.9 per cent of schools in London and 18.2 per cent in the South West).

In light of the government's recommendation that schools should set a benchmark of 50-90 per cent uptake of languages at KS4, heads of department were asked in the second survey whether such a benchmark has been set in their schools. 24.9 per cent of the heads of department reported that a benchmark has been set. Out of the 248 schools where language learning at KS4 was optional for all pupils, a benchmark had been set in only 47. In the majority of these schools the benchmark was set at 50 per cent or below. It was not clear that schools with low uptake in languages were setting a benchmark to raise numbers. The heads of department in only 33 of the 219 schools where less than 50 per cent of the pupils were learning a language in Year 10 in 2007 reported that a benchmark has been set.

Among the very few heads of department who did report change in KS4 provision in survey 2, 12 stated that languages were now optional for all pupils in KS4 and eight reported that languages were compulsory for fewer pupils. The reasons most frequently given for increasing the number of pupils for whom language learning at KS4 was optional were: whole school curriculum changes (8 schools); to increase the options available to pupils (three schools); and low motivation and poor behaviour (three schools). On the other hand, three heads of department reported that language learning is now compulsory for some pupils and in one SLC it is now compulsory for all. Two heads of department reported that since last year language study has been removed altogether from the Year 10 curriculum, citing government policy and the provision of alternatives to GCSE as reasons for the change.

When asked in survey 1 whether they believed languages should be compulsory for all pupils, only 18.4 per cent of heads of languages agreed that they should. 46.9 per cent felt that languages should be compulsory for most pupils, 25.8 per cent believed that they should be compulsory for some, with 8.9 per cent stating that languages should not be compulsory for anyone beyond KS3.

Languages study at KS4 was compulsory for all pupils in four of the schools in the case study sample, three of which were language colleges. In the others it was optional.

Heads of department and teachers in the case study schools agreed that giving pupils the choice of whether or not to study a foreign language at KS4 was the right decision since it meant that this would eliminate the situation whereby many pupils would be forced into studying languages against their will. Some held that 'pupils should have the right to choose what they want [to study]'. Other teachers, however, voiced mixed feelings:

I find it a little bit ignorant not to have the ability to speak any other language, not just necessarily European ones. I think it encourages integration better and a better understanding between everybody. [...] I do struggle with the concept of making a child do something where there is no genuine desire to [...] whether it's cos they can't do it or they don't understand it or whether they just don't like it. (Teacher, case study round 1)

To some extent the opinion that language study at KS4 should be optional was defended with reference to the particular context of the school. For instance, one head of department described her experience of compulsory languages at KS4 as a form of 'battling against years of an attitude that languages is totally irrelevant' prevalent in the geographical area in which the school was situated. Other teachers believed that there were different priorities in schools where many pupils had low levels of English literacy.

On the other hand, the heads of department of language colleges in the case study sample believed that languages should be compulsory for all or most of the pupils in KS4, provided appropriate courses were used. This view was also expressed by a head of department of a small non-specialist school in a socio-economically underprivileged area:

So although I value languages for everybody, it has to be in certain circumstances and maybe the very lowest ability should be used [sic] on a more vocational course, and a language course with a more vocational orientation certainly. (Head of department, case study round 1)

In several of the case study schools visited, languages departments were looking to offer alternative courses to the GCSE to keep pupils motivated and involved with language learning at some level at KS4. These included National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), Asset Languages Ladder, short courses, Entry Level and Certificate in Business Language Competence (CBLC).

In an open question in survey 1 respondents were asked for reasons to support their views on compulsory status in KS4. As to the benefits of language learning and why they should be compulsory for at least some pupils, the most popular reasons cited by heads of department can be seen in Table 7.2:

Table 7.2: Reasons for compulsory MFL for at least some pupils (first survey)

Reason for MFL to be compulsory for at least some pupils	% of respondents	Total number of comments
Personal benefits (development of general learning skills, the importance of a broad curriculum for the individual learner)	33.7%	243
Social benefits (opens minds, combats insularity and improves relations with different backgrounds, personal opportunities in terms of travel, leisure, interesting work)	14.7%	127
Economic benefits (shortage of linguists, the UK need to stay competitive in the international market and improved opportunities personally for job prospects)	13.2%	87
The world/European context in which we live	12.7%	87
Cultural benefits (experience of another culture)	12.9%	79
Decline of Foreign Languages and need to raise its status	8.3%	51
Help with literacy and English grammar	4.2%	26

The personal benefits of languages study was by far the most important category here with 243 comments on how knowledge of a language is an important skill, develops general learning skills and offers academic challenge. Languages should be compulsory according to one respondent because:

MFL lessons provide a wealth of experiences beyond the core purpose of learning a language. Students can connect in MFL and share the experience of working in pairs, supporting their peers, enjoying the subject through ICT, communicating and listening and understanding and smiling! (Head of department, survey round 1)

Lack of ability, poor motivation and poor literacy were the most commonly cited reasons why heads of department felt compulsory status was inappropriate for all, as can be seen in the table below:

Table 7.3: Reasons why MFL should not be compulsory for all pupils (first survey)

Reasons why MFL should be non-compulsory for all	% of respondents who wrote this Total number of comments
Not appropriate for the least able	7.4% 45 comments
Not appropriate for pupils with low motivation	6.5% 40
Those with poor English literacy	4.1% 25 comments
Not all benefit	3.1% 19 comments
Choice is important	2.6% 16 comments

Comments such as: *'Would not like to go back to bottom set disaffected Year 11s'* typified the responses from respondents who felt that compulsory languages for all was not appropriate.

When respondents' views on compulsory status were crosstabulated with the actual status of languages in their schools, figures show that 90.7 per cent of those who want languages to be optional work in schools where that is the case. Equally 87.8 per cent of those who believe languages should be compulsory for all work in schools where languages are either compulsory for all or most learners. This suggests a closeness of fit between principles and practice for a number of heads of department. However, 88.6 per cent of respondents who believe languages should be compulsory for all, most or some learners work in schools where languages at KS4 are optional, suggesting that a large number of heads of department have seen policy implemented that they do not agree with.

7.3 The compulsory / non-compulsory status of languages at KS4: whole school perspectives

Headteachers' reasons for making languages compulsory or non-compulsory

Headteachers were asked in the case study interviews for reasons for retaining the compulsory status or otherwise of languages at their schools. The main reasons that headteachers of non-languages colleges gave for making languages non-compulsory were to do with the historically poor delivery of languages in their schools, poor pupil motivation, and their belief that learners should enjoy what they are studying:

You want children to enjoy and achieve so you want to create an environment where they can make positive choices rather than that they are compelled to do things ... So I'm happy that languages are compulsory at KS3 but I'm also happy that they make a choice at KS4. I'm not convinced of the value of making languages compulsory at KS4. What I'd like to see is that it's so good that they want to do it at KS4. (Headteacher, case study round 1)

Many headteachers held up choice as a good thing and believed it was better, through effective and motivating teaching, to create the conditions in KS3 that encouraged learners to continue with their study of languages rather than compel them to do so. On a pragmatic level several also admitted that the award of specialist status, and particularly a second specialism, squeezed the space available at KS4. The amount of choice at KS4, so that 'it's almost too exciting', was to the detriment of those subjects, such as languages, perceived as less exciting. Headteachers spoke about the wide range of choice and of children being

pulled in different directions and wanting to do so many other things. There were also some comments about the difficulties of staffing the languages department adequately. One head reported the school's entry into special measures a few years ago as a reason for making languages non-compulsory.

The majority of headteachers were resistant to the idea that it was results at GCSE that influenced their decision to make languages non-compulsory post KS3, although there were several who said quality of the delivery and poor results at GCSE had been a factor:

*Because the delivery was so appalling, the outcomes were so appalling. ... If people are not able to deliver the outcomes, then the course shouldn't be delivered because I'm not prepared to let the children down.
(Headteacher, case study round 1)*

One headteacher noted that the fact it 'appears harder to achieve success in a modern languages GCSE than it is in any other GCSE' meant that pupils did not want to take it.

In none of the schools where languages were non-compulsory was there any indication from the headteachers that they were likely to re-introduce compulsory status, although some had been surprised by the number of pupils who had given up at the first opportunity and reported this as being far higher than they would have predicted. One head noted:

And to be honest, I'm not bothered about making it compulsory. The fact that kids opt in to do a language, and the fact that so many are opting in, I think is a healthy situation. These people are wanting to do a language and I think that's a good thing. (Headteacher, case study 1)

The idea that departments should be marketing their subject and were right to do so was mentioned by several headteachers: 'Really if subject teachers have any sense they're promoting their subject from when kids come through the door, aren't they?'

Headteachers' views on uptake

The second round of case study visits revealed that in three of the 12 schools without SLC status, more than 50 per cent of the pupils took a language at KS4. In the four schools where 40-50 per cent of the pupils continued with language learning in KS4, the heads were largely contented with the situation. One head was particularly enthusiastic about what she perceived to be a high level of uptake: 'It's one of the strongest departments in the school. It's probably got more children opting to do Modern Foreign Languages than any other subject.' Another head would have liked more of the 'academically able' pupils to take a language but was resigned to them 'being seduced by other subjects.' In a school where uptake was at 40 per cent, the head explained that a benchmark of 50 per cent had been set but the introduction of ICT into the core curriculum in KS4 meant this would not be achieved. In one school where 50 per cent of current KS4 pupils learnt a language, the head had taken the decision to reduce the number of language groups from six to four in the coming year in the light of potential staffing issues. This led to tension, as languages teachers were recommending pupils to continue with languages, and then pupils were told it was impossible as they were not in a high enough set.

In the five schools with particularly low uptake of languages at KS4 (10-30 per cent) the heads expressed their concern about this, describing the low uptake as 'frustrating' and 'soul-destroying' where languages teachers were striving to raise uptake with little success. Two heads foresaw that low uptake may have a serious impact on languages provision in the school:

*I don't want languages to die. I've run a GCSE group with six children this year, which is not cost-effective, but I feel I owe it to the children to support the six that did want to do it I know for a fact they'll come out with As and A*s once [the head of department has] finished with them. I don't know how much longer we can continue to recruit six or seven children. (Headteacher, case study round 2)*

Some headteachers showed more commitment than others to the concept of a broad education and said they supported languages at KS4 whether group sizes warranted running a class or not:

We have got small groups but we have made the decision to run it even though there might only be six to eight children in a group. We feel it's important that we keep it on the curriculum, as expensive as it can be. (Headteacher, case study round 2)

Several others said they would not run a group if it was not economically viable and a couple mentioned this squeeze as affecting humanities and music as well as languages at KS4.

7.4 Timetabling and option blocking

The case study data reveal that, in addition to pupil motivation, timetabling issues that have arisen as a result of the policy of optional languages at KS4 seem to be playing an important role in depressing uptake figures, as also reported by CILT in 2004. In some schools a reduction in the amount of time allocated to language learning had serious implications for the number of pupils who could follow a GCSE course. There was also felt to be a narrow system of option choices in a number of case study schools:

Yes it could be to blame. I mean it was a purely free options choice but when somebody only has four options choices and they want to make sure that within that they have, for example, you know, a humanity, a technology that they need to do for a job that they want to do in life, it can start to really limit. A lot of children put languages down as their fifth or sixth choice but they have to be pragmatic and I do wonder if having four options instead of five has again affected the uptake at KS4 but I would say that I do not feel that it is in any way deliberate. (Head of department, case study round 1)

Most headteachers said they offered a completely free choice where options were concerned. Some schools adopted a very 'hands-off' approach, with options blocks presented to the pupils through assemblies and options evenings, and then left to the child and parents to decide. More commonly, there was also discussion with pupils and possibly with parents, and careers guidance offered.

Some schools guided the able linguists so that they had little choice but to opt to study a language:

Well, languages isn't compulsory, but we make it almost compulsory for the very, very able linguists because we feel they would be wasting a talent. ... You know if we didn't put any pressure on them, we didn't counsel them, we didn't guide them, I suspect we wouldn't get six classes of languages. (Head of department, case study round 1)

The problem is particularly acute in relation to dual linguists. For instance, in one language college which is a faith school, religious education and ICT were compulsory GCSE subjects. The result was that the pupils only had room to select two optional subjects for KS4.

A number of pupils from different case study schools reported timetabling constraints as influencing their decision not to take a language beyond KS3:

I would have chosen it if we had another option to choose but we didn't. We only got three this year. (Year 9 girl, case study round 2)

*I would have done French if there's like more options.
(Year 9 boy, case study round 2)*

Schools are employing a range of strategies to overcome this obstacle to diversification and dual language study in KS4. One head of department of a language college reported that the second language was placed in an option block which did not compete with other 'academic subjects'. A further way of supporting this has been through the introduction either of twilight classes teaching other competing subjects as in the language college referred to here, or of after school language classes, as in the following Business and Enterprise School:

*There's been more children this year who've been told they can't do it because it won't fit [...] Well, this year the initial satisfaction rate was only about 65 per cent which makes me think it might be worthwhile for us to push for columns. [...] Because I've got an after school French group, I would probably have accepted French and German in the same column because people who want to do two could do it after school if they really wanted to, but German and history - people would want to do both of those.
(Head of department, case study round 2)*

It is likely that increased diversification in the offer of vocational courses as well as diplomas will have a further impact on uptake. Two heads reported that the introduction of Diplomas and a greater emphasis on vocational courses was already impacting on language uptake negatively and several heads foresaw that this would increase pressure on languages in the future:

*There's leisure and tourism; travel and tourism; there's health and social care; there's construction. There are so many sweeties out on the counter that languages and other traditional subjects have to work hard to keep the shine.
(Headteacher, case study 2)*

7.5 Impact of optional languages on KS3 provision

In survey 2, 45.9 per cent of respondent heads of department reported that the change of policy regarding the compulsory status of languages at KS4 has had an impact upon KS3 languages teaching and learning in their school. In an open question about the nature of that impact, the majority of responses related to pupils' attitudes: approximately half of those responding (78 heads of department) identified earlier disaffection at KS3 and 18 commented that it had undermined the status of languages. Other heads of department described changes to the teaching in KS3 including a focus on motivating learners through KS3 (13) and the need to 'sell' languages in KS3 (12).

In the case study schools several teachers commented that since languages study became optional at KS4 it has been more challenging to maintain pupils' motivation throughout KS3, as learners can choose not to continue language learning if they do not see the relevance or if they find it difficult:

*I think it's more in Year 9 but some in Year 8. It's usually with the weaker pupils. I think if they're struggling a bit, they find there's no point in it. It's optional so they don't have to choose it so they start losing interest.
(Head of department, case study round 2)*

At KS4, however, a number of teachers described their work as more enjoyable and less stressful as the pupils learning a language have chosen to do so:

I love my job at the moment cos we get the best kids taking languages. We get the motivated kids and I really don't want personally to have to sort out the ones who, you know, sit there and would say, 'What's the point of doing French cos I'm never going to go to France?' That sort of thing. [...] When I first came here five years ago it was languages for all and the problems it threw up, it just wasn't worth the stress. I don't think I'd stay in the job if it was like when I first came. (Teacher, case study round 2)

There was some evidence that provision of languages at KS3 was being constructed around options policy at KS4. One way in which this was happening in a number of the case study schools was through introduction of fast-tracking of language learning at KS3, in some cases seen as a way of dealing with the problem of finding space in the curriculum for pupils to pursue the study of two languages, as in the following example at an Arts College:

They used to have the opportunity to carry on with the first language but also take a second language and then with all the changes in the curriculum this went. We argued the point that we want dual linguists because if you've got gifted linguists, if they want to continue with it, they need more than one language. You know, they want to go on and do two languages at A level so this was why. But the way we agreed with SMT (Senior Management team) was to do fast-tracking which we've done and it has worked. We've had some good results. Pupils are guided. They are told that if they're going to be doing their GCSE at the end of Year 9, then they are expected to do the next language in Year 10 and 11 and we have had a good uptake, so we end up with 30 maybe dual linguists at the end of Year 11 which is, you know, fantastic. (Head of department, case study round 1)

Where there was dual language provision in KS3 schools made space for this to happen by reducing the total number of classes per week allocated to languages. One head of department, for instance, felt that provision at KS3 had been 'watered down' to three lessons per fortnight and that this had led to a drop in results at GCSE. Negotiations with the school's leadership team at the Arts College referred to above was based around the trade-off between introduction of Year 9 fast-track and compromise over reduction of total number of allocated languages lessons on the timetable:

Because they've reduced the number of periods, we're not having the fast track. And obviously they like the fast track. It's good for the school. [...] So we're talking about having lesson 7. There are 6 periods in the day and we're talking about having a lesson 7 which will start with next year's Year 7. (Head of department, case study round 1)

A further impact that fast-tracking is having at this school is on mixed ability teaching at Year 7. The intended plan to introduce the restructuring of provision will mean that the groups will be 'setted' at the end of the first term, so that the top set can begin the fast-track in January. It would appear therefore that structural considerations based on targeted KS4 performance are in some cases impacting on pedagogical planning much lower down the school, such as much less mixed ability teaching in Year 7.

At another school in the sample, a Business and Enterprise School, the leadership team is considering reducing KS3 language learning to two years, and beginning the GCSE curriculum in Year 9:

You have a handful of kids go off the rails and it really does affect the figures. That's what we've found in the last few years. So they're looking at two years at KS3; all departments have been asked to devise some kind of plan [...] I think because we get three lessons a week with the kids, which I consider to be good, we've got good resources. We've got a lot of things at our finger-tips, and I think if they complete their language studies in Year 7, they can get the KS3 stuff done, so I feel in Year 8 I'm starting to hold the kids back: 'No you don't want to get level 6 yet, there's still next year'. They could get it in two years and we've all agreed to that, so we're looking at getting the KS3s into Year 7 and 8 and then in Year 9 starting to look at GCSE.
(Head of department, case study round 1)

Such thinking may reflect some teachers' misinterpretation of how to stretch pupils using the full range of scores on the National Curriculum levelling framework. It also represents an inadequate view of the content and expectations in the KS3 language classroom, if teachers feel they have to hold back in order to for it to stretch out over three years. The quotation also indicates how, in some cases at least, thinking about KS3 language provision was influenced by KS4 considerations.

At another school, a Sports College, these KS4 uptake considerations have impacted on KS3 language provision through the choice of course taught.

We've been given the money to do things like putting set 3 in Year 9 through Entry Level in one year instead of the two years it would normally take at KS4, as a kind of incentive to keep them really motivated and focused in Year 9.
(Head of department, case study round 1)

So at this school the decision to include Entry Level vocational French and German courses in Year 9 was primarily influenced by considerations regarding motivation and incentive to continue with the study of the language at KS4. However, mixed in with this rather pragmatic approach to the planning of KS3 teaching, the head of department in question did also believe in the importance of enjoyment of language learning at KS3 over the pedagogical aim of continued study into KS4:

My personal opinion, I would rather have happy language learners who give it up at the end of KS3 than unhappy language learners who carry on to KS4, because I feel that our job is not just to get them to the highest level possible, or to encourage recruitment to KS4, part of our job is to encourage life-long language learners. (Head of department, case study round 1)

At another school in the sample, the department dealt with the issue of KS4 simply by beginning GCSE French at the start of Year 9. This was the head of department's preferred option instead of fast-tracking:

We start the GCSEs at the beginning of Year 9 and we take it through to the end of Year 11 and that is absolutely perfect, in my view, for giving them the time and I wouldn't really have it any other way at the moment. [...] But because we start the GCSE in Year 9, by the end of Year 9 they have a piece of coursework under their belt and that makes them feel quite positive about continuing into Year 10. (Head of department. case study round 1)

7.6 Encouraging uptake: approaches used in KS3 to promote language learning beyond KS3

Survey findings on how languages were promoted in KS3

In an open question in survey 1 heads of department were asked how languages were promoted in KS3 at a department or school level to encourage uptake. Talks and presentations were the most commonly cited way of promoting language learning (45.8 per cent). Within this category, 15.7 per cent of heads of department mentioned in-class discussion, with 12.9 per cent hosting evening events and 11.6 per cent drawing on visiting speakers. Of note is the fact that only 3.9 per cent of respondents said they asked KS4 or KS5 language learners to talk to younger learners about the subject.

Three further categories for the promotion of languages beyond KS3 were mentioned by similar numbers of respondents:

- Trips and visits abroad and within the UK (35.2 per cent)
- The use of promotional materials such as CILT materials, displays, DVDs (33.5 per cent)
- Good teaching at KS3 (33.3 per cent)

As the final bullet point indicates, heads of department referred to the quality of the learning experience in KS3, including building learner confidence, using a variety of teaching methods and making lessons engaging and enjoyable as ways of promoting further study of language beyond KS3. Typical comments here included: *'Currently making enjoyment at KS3 a priority'*.

Enrichment activities such as languages events, theatre visits and languages clubs were mentioned by 20.8 per cent of respondents, and guidance at GCSE choice time, including the targeting of individual pupils and involving parents in the decision-making process via letters home, was mentioned by 16.7 per cent. Offering a variety of courses at KS4 was seen by 9.2 per cent of respondents as likely to promote the study of languages beyond KS3. However, figures for a question asking which courses were on offer in respondents' schools show that in fact the vast majority offered just GCSE (80.9 per cent) at KS4, with only 7.3 per cent offering vocational courses, 3.4 per cent Asset Languages, 5.4 per cent Certificate of Achievement and 5.2 per cent some A Level work.

Case study findings on how languages were promoted in KS3

Many of the approaches cited in the survey as being employed in KS3 to promote languages study were also reflected in the case study evidence. It is clear that most of the schools are putting a lot of effort into promotional strategies during KS3 to promote uptake at KS4. Many of the heads of department and teachers interviewed had invested much energy and thought into the planning of these activities and had some idea of their effectiveness. Most of the schools had invited external speakers from industry, higher education, or personal contact to speak about the importance of languages in the world of work. Amongst the reportedly most successful was a former personnel manager at Marks and Spencer's who was now training as a PGCE student. At another school, the mother of a Year 11 pupil at the school talked to the Year 9 class about how, in her work at Barclays Bank, she looks out for candidates with some knowledge of a foreign language.

One head of department integrated the theme of the importance of languages for jobs within the topic focus of the Year 9 Spanish course:

It's really trying to make them feel successful and also talking about the importance of languages for their jobs [...] I've integrated that into the Spanish course for Year 9, access to the internet sites about languages and work, posters, people talking about languages so we've tried to include that into the curriculum as much as possible. (Head of department, case study round 1)

A second common way in which languages uptake was promoted was through contact with parents. In addition to communication at options evenings, some schools sent letters home around that time as well, in one case targeting specific pupils who were considered to be appropriate candidates:

We took the data for Year 9, the entire group, and we looked at those students who were predicted A- C and we had permission from the head to send a letter home to all those students who were predicted A*- C in MFL to let the parents be aware that actually this would be a sensible choice of option. Numbers picked up again. (Head of department, case study round 1)*

At another school the languages teachers mentored all the Year 9 pupils whom they had identified as suitable for language learning at KS4 in the month leading up to options and each pupil was interviewed individually by a member of the leadership team:

We interview all the pupils, the mentoring that we sort of selected to do and recommended to do a language. And it's fantastic. [...] the opportunity to talk to the pupils. Well we don't get that opportunity very often but that was ... it went on over a period of a month. (Head of department, case study round 1)

Another teacher described 'nurturing' individual pupils she thought ought to take a language:

From day one I was like nurturing the ones I knew might be thinking about it, and who I thought should be, and kept on their back, asking them, when I was in the lessons, talking about things they would be doing next year, and how much better it would be, trips and all this sort of thing. Well, they've done their options now and I think I've got about fifteen, but I wanted far more than that. (Teacher, case study round 1)

Peer encouragement was also a strategy used by some schools. One head of department described the practice as a kind of Rough Guide to KS4 language uptake, using Year 10 or Year 11 pupils at options evenings: ' "Now you can go and talk to Lucy or Michael and they'll tell you what it's really like" And they dealt with groups of parents around them and they talked to them. Really amazing.' A teacher in another school believed that it was important for the KS3 pupils to hear about language learning at KS4 from the learners:

I get my Year 10s to write what they think about languages and what they think about the course and I mix them all up and when we do options I say they've written whatever they like. I haven't read them. 'Pick a few. See what they say.' Because I think it's best from peers than from me to tell them what they believe it's like. (Teacher, case study round 1)

There was a feeling amongst some heads of department that one-off promotional activities may be less effective than the day-to-day reinforcement through lessons that language learning might be a good option. Teachers recognised the need for the teaching to be engaging throughout KS3 and in Year 9 in particular:

In our Year 9 teaching we have been looking out for things that might interest certain students, trying to keep them motivated. We've done art projects, we've done sport things, for the individual really, just trying to keep them motivated. (Teacher, case study round 1)

Teachers described using themselves and their friends as role models to illustrate the value of language learning:

I use my other half as an example who is a mechanic and hated French at school but lived with me abroad and now every time, cos he works with lorries, every time a foreign lorry comes in, all the guys in the office go and fetch him cos the ones who don't speak English tend to speak French, so he gets to use quite a lot in that sort of sense. (Teacher, case study round 1)

Teachers who are native speakers of other languages provide 'living evidence' for the pupils that it is possible to achieve a level of fluency in a foreign language:

They ask me questions sometimes: 'Did you learn English when you were young?' I say 'Yes, I spent so many years learning English. It was hard!' [laughs] [...] So I do try to relate to them and make them realise that, yes, when I was learning English it was really tough and I wasn't brilliant at it but I carried on'. (Teacher, case study round 1)

The message that learning a language at KS4 is a positive and realistic option for them is implicitly conveyed by giving the pupils' confidence in their own ability in languages. This confidence is also built up by integrating GCSE activities into lessons from early on in Year 9 and then showing the pupils that they were able to handle the work at this level:

From the very start of Year 9, we start talking to them as and when it sort of comes up in lessons, just mentioning it in terms of sort of, you know, their GCSE options, and talk to them about what's expected or we quite often give them activities which are GCSE level and then afterwards tell them: 'Oh by the way, that was Year 11 work.' And they realise that they can do it. That's quite motivating for them. (Head of department, case study round 2)

This effect was similarly reinforced by informing the pupils that, as the majority of topics at GCSE are the same as those covered in KS3, continuing with the language at KS4 represents a kind of revision or extension of what they have been already doing. The same effect was created by making connections between GCSE grades and National Curriculum levels, also combating the frequently held image of languages as a difficult subject:

We give them an indication of what they have to be able to do to get a grade C, which is equivalent to a good level 5 or level 6 piece of writing. So we'll say to them: 'How many of you in here have already got a level 5 writing?' Every hand will go up at some point. So we'll say to them: 'Right, you've just achieved a piece of writing. If you did that at GCSE you'd be on a grade D already'. (Head of department, case study round 1)

Other strategies used in the case study schools included use of statistics derived from CILT surveys and Languages at Work materials in PowerPoint presentations to pupils; e-twinning and other forms of contact with pupils abroad; priority given to pupils choosing languages GCSE on exchanges and trips to the target country; assemblies and conferences organised through project links with other schools and organisations; visits from organisations such as La France Directe; collaborative projects with other departments; outings, including the following example of groups of pupils accompanying their teacher to their local primary for a celebration of languages event:

Oh they absolutely loved that because I carefully chose children who had been to that primary school, and they loved showing off to their old teachers about what progress they'd made. And seeing their friends and brothers and sisters. They like that. (Head of department, case study round 1)

Implicit in the range of strategies outlined above is teachers' recognition that pupils' motivation to continue learning a language can evolve through positive language learning experiences, confidence that they can achieve and an awareness of the benefits of speaking another language:

They look forward to it as an enjoyable lesson and ultimately that does eventually translate into KS4 when they start saying, 'Oh, Miss, I might want to be an airhostess'. I think that was probably my major success here when I had a bottom set and one girl just happened to say, 'Miss, I'm going to be an airhostess and they said I need Spanish.' And all of a sudden it changed from, 'I quite like Spanish even though I'm not very good at it,' to 'Hang on a minute. I like it so why don't I use it?' (Head of department, case study round 1)

Headteachers felt that there needed to be strategies in place to encourage as many learners as possible to continue with languages. Some of the strategies listed below were already in place in schools and some were listed as potential useful strategies:

- offering a wider variety of courses such as OCR's Certificate in Business Language Competence (CBLC) / vocational and Asset
- offering opportunities for going abroad to encourage pupils
- introducing Spanish
- making one language compulsory at KS4 for pupils who have studied two languages in KS3
- making more use of the technology that is in place e.g. a video-conferencing suite
- getting companies that deal with Europe in to talk to the children about the importance of languages
- early entry and fast-tracking
- offering taster course
- offering options interviews with the leadership team where pupils can be advised to continue with a language
- developing a bilingual stream (language college initiative)
- timetabling with more flexibility e.g. with some classes taught in twilight sessions.

Of these, CLBC and vocational courses were mentioned by a fair number of headteachers, suggesting that they viewed traditional GCSE as inappropriate for many of their learners but were supportive of attempts to involve them in some form of language study.

However, the main strategy mentioned by headteachers was at classroom level rather than at a strategic planning level, *i.e.* making the learning consistently good across the department as this headteacher in round 1 commented: ‘*As I say getting the biggest strategy is actually getting the teaching right*’.

7.7 The benefits of languages study as explained to pupils

In an open question in survey 1 respondents were asked what they tell pupils are the benefits of continuing to study a language. As can be seen in Table 7.4, of greatest importance was improved job prospects from studying a language, with over three quarters of the respondents mentioning this as a benefit.

Table 7.4: What heads of department tell pupils are the benefits of continuing the study of languages (first survey)

Benefits of studying MFL	Percentage of respondents
Vocational prospects (improved job prospects and higher salary)	75.5%
The development of general skills (transferable skills, life skills, communication skills, improved literacy)	39.7%
Using the language (travel, holidays, working abroad, getting to know people)	36.3%
Qualifications (well regarded by universities and employers)	34.5%
The international context (the need for cultural awareness, the global economy, the European context)	33%
Enjoyment (pleasure, intellectual challenge, interest)	22.5%

Of note is the fact that over three quarters of respondents said that they told pupils that improved vocational prospects was one of the main benefits of continued study of MFL, with a total of 556 comments. However, as can be seen from Table 6.2, economic benefits (including to the country’s economy as a whole) was mentioned by only 13.2 per cent (87 comments) when respondents were asked why they felt languages study should be compulsory for at least some pupils. This suggests that heads of department were using predominantly utilitarian arguments when promoting languages to KS3 pupils, when they in fact considered the main benefits to lie elsewhere.

Pupils’ views on continuing with languages

In order to see if pupils’ reasons for wanting to continue with languages or otherwise resonated with teachers’ understandings of what might motivate them, pupils were asked for their views on continuing with languages study. In the individual interviews in the first year of the case study visits, most of the Year 8 pupils in schools where languages were compulsory said they would carry on with a language. The most frequently mentioned reason Year 8 pupils gave for wanting to continue was whether they enjoyed the lessons. Pupils commented that lessons were fun and exciting, that there was a lively atmosphere, and that they liked their teacher: ‘*It’s like really fun as well cos you enjoy it cos like a lively atmosphere.*’ (Year 8 boy, case study round 1)

Other reasons given for wanting to continue included the fact that they found languages easy and were good at the subject and whether they would use languages later on, either for jobs and careers or for travelling and meeting people.

Similar reasons for wanting to continue with languages emerged from the focus group interviews, though the balance of comments was slightly different as a result of the way the discussions developed. In this case, vocational reasons were cited most frequently.

The pupils who said they did not want to continue explained that they did not enjoy the lessons, they found languages difficult and they wanted to learn other more useful subjects at GCSE, as one boy explained:

*You might as well learn other things, like geography and ICT and that, because that's what's going to happen, like ICT, everything's going to be computers.
(Year 8 boy, case study round 1)*

When asked what factors they would take into account when deciding whether or not to continue with languages at KS4, the main factor given was whether languages would be important for the future, either for university and jobs or for going abroad. The other main factors mentioned were whether they liked the subject and whether they were good at it. In addition to this, pupils would consider how difficult languages were, whether they would be able to get a good mark at GCSE, what other options they wanted to take, and which subjects were 'better' to have as qualifications, as one girl explained:

So what subjects it's good to have on there cos I think the harder - if you get a good mark in a harder subject then it looks better than if you get it in an easy subject like art or drama. (Year 8 girl, case study round 1)

As they had mentioned in Year 8, the main factor that pupils reported as guiding their option choices in Year 9 was whether languages would be important for the future, either for university and jobs or for going abroad (mentioned by nearly half the pupils). The other main factors mentioned were whether they enjoyed languages, whether they were good at them, and whether they would be able to achieve a high grade at GCSE.

In Year 8 pupils in schools where languages were compulsory held mixed views about having to continue at KS4. While some were happy to be continuing with languages, others were unhappy about compulsory status because they found languages hard or did not enjoy the subject:

*So I end up doing French and end up like getting like a D or something. I'd look bad on my like report and everything. But if I dropped it and then I put like something like DT in, and I'd got an A on that.
(Boy, focus group case study round 1)*

By Year 9 many of these doubts seemed to have disappeared and pupils in schools where languages were compulsory at KS4 were positive about continuing. However, of the 64 pupils in schools where languages were non-compulsory, 27 had opted to continue, which compares unfavourably to their intentions as stated in Year 8. Reasons given included difficulties in making fitting it into their timetable, and finding other subjects more useful or more enjoyable. However, also of note was the fact that many Year 9 pupils (46) reported that languages had become more difficult in Year 9, which seemed to impact on their enjoyment of lessons.

7.8 Ideal KS4 languages courses

When asked what they would ideally like languages courses at KS4 to look like, the heads of department revealed three main types of preference in the interviews.

Firstly, a number of heads of department said they would like to see more vocationally oriented courses as an alternative to GCSE. In some cases, they were speaking from the basis of their own current experience of such courses. One person wanted such a course for *'those not going to achieve a C grade easily'*. The CBLC was cited by a few in the sample; however this head of department would prefer the content to be framed around the language and communicative needs of apprentices rather than company directors. At another case study school, an Arts College, the languages head of department, with a degree in business studies, was also head of business studies, and describes the CBLC course as *'not ideal'*, but added *'I don't think there's anything out there that really is ideal for a lot of kids.'* A further echo of this issue was made by a head of department at another case study school who stated that *'in an ideal world I would like us to offer a vocational language course but I have to say that it does scare me a little bit about the demands that will make on myself and on my colleagues.'*

A second, recurring response to the question was made with reference to the GCSE. Some heads of department and teachers would like to *'free up GCSE a bit more'* in order to *'make it more relevant'* and so learners can *'have fun and be creative'*. Several teachers envisaged that with less focus on results and increased creative and cross-curricular work, language learning at KS4 could be a more enriching experience for the pupils. Some would like the topic content of GCSE to be strengthened through assessment and through a reduction of the range of topics, eliminating some of the less age-appropriate topics such as family and eating out, and focussing in more depth on issues that would interest adolescents such as *'the environment or love or relationships and drugs'*. Others would like more of a cultural input on the courses.

Finally, another point made by some of the heads of department was the desire to tailor courses to the needs of individual pupils, as with Entry Level or Asset:

*I think Asset's got it right that you can pick and choose and each skill picks up points. I think that's a great idea. So I think there is some mileage in that, but I would still like a CBLC type of course, but without the business context.
(Head of department, case study 1)*

Another teacher, at a Language college, saw examinations as essentially *'frustrating'*, encouraging *'teaching to exams'* rather than *'teaching [pupils] to speak languages or understand languages'*. He would like more space for creativity and for individuality: *'I do believe languages can be for all. But I don't believe they can be for all in the system that we have.'*

8 Higher standards in KS3 language learning: drivers and challenges

This chapter discusses findings in relation to the final research question: ‘What are the drivers for, and challenges to, higher standards in KS3 language learning?’ The chapter begins by giving a statistical account of the responses given by heads of department to survey questions about what constrained or supported effective learning of languages at KS3. This is followed by a section that analyses headteachers’ views on factors affecting the work of their languages staff, as elicited at interview during the case study visits. The third section reports on teachers’ descriptions of drivers for change; the fourth section explores the notions of drivers and challenges to effective practice through a probing of five pedagogical themes that emerge from the qualitative data (teacher and pupil interviews, and lesson observations) that were elicited during the two series of case study visits. Finally, the concluding section presents the key positive and negative factors influencing the development of higher standards in language learning at this level.

8.1 Key findings

The survey findings indicate that the majority of heads of department consider the Secondary National Strategy and the KS3 Framework for Languages as driver for higher standards in language teaching and learning. Similarly, a high proportion of respondents viewed formative and summative assessment at KS3 as supporting factors for pupil learning.

Organisational factors, such as timetabling and resourcing, were named overwhelmingly by heads of department in both surveys as most likely to either constrain or support effective teaching. The following were felt to support effective teaching: teaching resources and in particular good ICT provision (73 per cent of respondents), staffing (59 per cent), training (53 per cent), and the use of Foreign Language Assistants (FLAs) (55 per cent). Factors that were seen to constrain effective teaching were lack of time allocation to languages (46 per cent), timetabling (54 per cent), and class size (45 per cent). Headteachers focused primarily on the quality of their languages staff as the key to the standard of language learning in their school.

The case study data indicated that collaboration with other teachers outside the school, for instance working with feeder primaries or in Strategic Learning Networks (SLNs), could provide a stimulus for innovation in teaching. However, involvement in SLNs was not necessarily seen by all heads of department as productive. The second survey indicated that of the 56 per cent of heads of department who said they were part of an SLN, only 38 per cent said this had had some impact on language provision at KS3 and 61 per cent said there had been no impact.

Collaboration within school was also raised as positively impacting on KS3 work. Several of the case study teachers had enjoyed the experience of working collaboratively with other departments in their school, for example on a ‘Eurovision Song Contest’ with music where pupils wrote and performed songs in the target language and teaching the history of the First World War in French. Several teachers reported wanting to develop more of a context for their study of the foreign language and to teach in a way that allowed for the discussion to be on a more ‘adult footing’ which such forms of collaboration might allow.

There was evidence of increasing use of ICT over time in the case studies. More teachers reported that they were becoming more confident in using PowerPoint presentations and language learning websites in their teaching and some were beginning to use Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) to support learning. There was also evidence that teachers who were already using ICT to a significant extent were thinking about how to use it

creatively and in ways which most appropriately support language learning e.g. podcasting, using digital video camera to support AfL in speaking work. There was evidence from interviews with pupils in both rounds that they were likely to view this as supporting their learning.

When asked at interview to identify drivers for change, teachers and heads of department referred to the following factors: the commitment and motivation of departmental staff; the presence of Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) and trainee teachers; being aware of the current educational developments; the status of languages in the school and the role of language learning in strengthening intercultural understanding; a focus on learning rather than teaching; involvement in In-Service training (INSET).

It was clear from both rounds of case study interviews that a key driver for pupils was interactivity in the languages classroom. Pupils tended to name the *same* activities, when asked both what they enjoyed and what they felt was most beneficial for their learning. These were activities where they were able to interact with each other or the teacher, such as games, role plays, group work, and using the interactive whiteboard. Interactivity was also raised as a main factor in pupil perception of the relative difficulty of languages as compared to other curricular areas. Pupils who thought languages were easier in relation to other curricular subjects commented in particular on the way they were taught (i.e. interactively), including mention of the frequency of speaking activities.

8.2 Constraining and supporting factors at KS3: the view of heads of languages

Findings from first survey (2006)

The first survey (2006) contained an open-ended item in which heads of department were asked to indicate the main factors that had constrained and supported effective teaching and learning of languages at KS3 in their school. The majority of respondents answered this item (Q 42), with 87 per cent mentioning constraining factors and 84 per cent mentioning supporting factors. Most respondents listed several factors, both positive and negative, in approximately equal measure. Their responses were grouped into the following broad categories:

- the status of and support for languages in the school
- attitudes towards languages
- organisation
- curriculum and assessment, including the KS3 Framework for Languages
- language learning at KS2
- pupil ability

Table 8.1 shows the range of different factors mentioned by the respondents and what proportion each represents of the total number of comments made:

Table 8.1: Main constraining and supporting factors (first survey)

	Constraining factors (% of comments)	Supporting factors (% of comments)
Status of and support for languages	18	13
Attitudes towards languages	18.5	4.2
Organisation	53.6	63.7
Curriculum and assessment	4.7	9.1
KS3 Framework for languages	0.7	8.1
Language learning at KS2	1.1	1.0
Pupil ability	3.4	0.9
Total number of comments	1238	1227

As can be seen, organisational issues were overwhelmingly identified by the heads of department as factors which constrained and supported effective language learning at KS3. The next most frequent references (though much less numerous than those identifying organisational factors) related to the status of languages in the school and support for language learning in the school. Attitudinal factors (18.5%) were identified more as sources of constraint, whereas curricular issues were slightly more identified as supportive factors than other remaining categories. In what follows, the heads of department' responses are described in more detail. Where percentages are given, these relate to the percentage of respondents who commented on the various factors and should not be taken as percentages of the survey sample as a whole.

Constraining factors

As described above, over half the comments made about constraining factors related to organisational issues in the school. These could be broken down into a number of categories, including time allocation to languages and timetabling issues, funding and resources, class size, pupil grouping, and staffing. Of these, the most frequently mentioned factor was that of time allocation. In all, 31.8 per cent of heads of department listed this as a constraining factor. Their comments included: lack of teaching time at KS3, lack of time for the second foreign language, insufficient time for able pupils and dual linguists, and the fact that pupils were withdrawn from MFL for other activities. For 18.4 per cent of respondents, poor timetabling was also an issue, with double lessons, afternoon lessons and two-week timetables the main constraining factors. In addition to this, 28.6 per cent of respondents mentioned problems with funding and resources, including the lack of interactive whiteboards, lack of access to ICT facilities, inadequate accommodation and lack of training in MFL. Staffing was also a problem for 21.4 per cent of respondents, who referred to lack of staff expertise and experience, frequent staff changes, recruitment difficulties, and the lack of foreign language assistants or learning support assistants. In addition to this, respondents commented that language classes were too large at KS3, that they were unable to set at KS3 and that they were constrained by the setting arrangements for other subjects.

In terms of status, nearly a quarter of respondents (22.6 per cent) referred to the negative impact of optional status at KS4 on teaching and learning at KS3. They commented, in particular, that optional status at KS4 had led to disaffection and poor behaviour at KS3 and that optional status was demoralising for languages staff. More generally, respondents commented on the low status of languages in the school and poor image within the community, and a few commented that their non-languages specialist status meant that other subjects took priority over languages. 7.7 per cent of respondents commented on lack of support from the school leadership team, as compared with that given to other subjects.

In terms of attitudes towards languages, over a quarter of respondents (26.1 per cent) commented on the lack of motivation to learn languages, particularly in the lower sets, as well as pupils' lack of confidence in languages and poor behaviour at KS3. In addition to this, respondents commented that pupils and parents did not perceive languages to be an important or useful subject and that languages were perceived to be a difficult subject in relation to other subjects.

Relatively few respondents felt that other factors, such as curriculum and assessment, pupil ability, and language learning at KS2 had constrained teaching and learning at KS3.

Supporting factors

As with the constraining factors, a high proportion of the comments received relating to supporting factors are concerned with organisational factors in the school which had supported effective teaching and learning at KS3, and these could be broken down into similar categories. The most frequently mentioned organisational factors were those of funding and resources, and staffing. In all, 70.3 per cent of heads of department felt that their funding and resources had supported effective teaching and learning in their school. Supporting factors included good ICT resources, interactive whiteboards and multi-media projectors, funding for Local Authority and CILT in-service training (INSET), good teaching resources and course books, and adequate funding for visits to schools abroad. In addition to this, 65.5 per cent of heads of department commented that the staffing for languages in their school had supported teaching and learning. Factors noted included: availability of FLAs and native speakers, availability of support staff, high quality staff (defined as enthusiastic, imaginative, hard working, experienced and able to work as a team), and adequate staffing levels. Though these were the organisational factors mentioned by most respondents, a few also commented that ability grouping, adequate time allocation, favourable timetabling and class size had a positive impact.

In terms of status and support, 12 per cent of heads of department commented on the high status of languages in their school and the positive impact of compulsory status at KS4, with a few referring to the positive impact of their status as a language college. In addition to this, 19 per cent of respondents commented on the positive impact of support received from the leadership team, higher education and the local authority.

Another area which was felt to have supported effective teaching and learning was that of curriculum and assessment, with 21.7 per cent of respondents commenting in general terms and a further 19.2 per cent of respondents making specific reference to the KS3 Strategy. Supporting curricular factors included: clear objectives; coherent and well-planned schemes of work; increased emphasis on thinking skills and grammar; teaching of ICT skills; active learning styles, and kinaesthetic teaching. Factors relating to assessment included: use of data; target setting; fast tracking, and the introduction of entry level qualifications. Respondents who made reference specifically to the KS3 Framework listed a number of factors which had supported teaching and learning, including: better structured three-part lessons; an increased focus on speaking and writing; greater use of the target language, and Assessment for Learning, and more motivating material.

Relatively few respondents felt that other factors, such as attitude, pupil ability, and language learning at KS2 had supported teaching and learning at KS3.

Findings from second survey (2007)

The validity of these findings from the first survey was tested in the second round of surveys administered in 2007. In this questionnaire, heads of department were asked to select, from a list compiled from responses to the open-ended question on this subject in the first year survey, the main factors which had constrained or supported effective teaching and learning at KS3 in their school. The list included the factors that have been discussed in the previous section and which related to:

- organisation (time allocation and timetabling, funding and resources, training, staffing, class size and pupil grouping)
- curriculum and assessment (including the KS3 Framework for Languages, the Secondary National Strategy, formative and summative assessment)
- language learning at KS2
- status of languages (optional/compulsory, specialist status of school)
- support for languages from Senior Leadership Team and LA
- attitudes towards languages (pupils, parents and community)
- pupil ability.

In terms of organisational issues, the picture presented in survey 2 differs very little from the picture in survey 1. This time the percentage figures quoted do represent the survey sample as a whole as the factors were listed on the questionnaire and respondents were asked to indicate whether they found them to be constraining or supportive in each case.

Factors which were perceived to have supported effective teaching and learning (see Table 7.2) included: the availability of teaching resources, such as ICT (72.8 per cent of respondents); staffing (59 per cent); the foreign language assistant (54.7 per cent); and training (53.2 per cent). Factors which were perceived to have constrained effective teaching and learning included: timetabling (54.2 per cent); time allocation to languages (46.1 per cent); and class size (44.8 per cent).

From a curriculum policy point of view, the survey findings suggest a predominantly positive view of the Secondary National Strategy and the KS3 Framework for Languages: 52.3 per cent of respondents thought that the Secondary National Strategy was a supporting factor as opposed to 3.3 per cent who did not, and 71.4 per cent thought the KS3 Framework for Languages was a supporting factor as opposed to 4.0 per cent who did not. Similarly, a high proportion of respondents held positive views about the role of assessment at KS3: 74.4 per cent and 67.8 per cent of respondents respectively thought that formative assessment and summative assessment were supporting factors, as opposed to 3.5 per cent and 5.3 per cent respectively who viewed them as constraining factors.

Survey findings show that respondents were positive about KS2 language learning rather than not, with 41.7 per cent perceiving it to have supported teaching and learning at KS3, as compared with 9.8 per cent who thought it had not, but nearly half the respondents (48.2 per cent) thought it had neither constrained nor supported teaching and learning at KS3.

56.7 per cent of respondents said that the Senior Leadership Team was a supporting factor, and 39.3 per cent said the same about support from the LA. However, views were divided as to whether the specialist status of the school, attitudes towards languages and pupil ability were factors which supported or constrained effective teaching and learning.

Table 8.2: Factors which have supported or constrained effective teaching and learning of languages in KS3 (second survey)

	Supportive	Constraining	Neither	Both
Status of languages in school (optional/compulsory)	42.5%	40.2%	17.0%	.3%
Specialist status of school	25.7%	18.3%	56.0%	
Support from Senior Leadership Team	56.7%	21.3%	21.0%	1.1%
Support from LA	39.3%	6.3%	54.5%	
Pupil attitudes towards languages	38.5%	42.5%	13.6%	5.4%
Attitudes of parents and community	40.3%	35.6%	19.0%	5.0%
Curriculum	43.1%	42.8%	13.8%	.3%
Time allocation to languages	38.8%	46.1%	14.6%	.5%
Timetabling	24.8%	54.2%	19.3%	1.6%
Teaching and ICT resources	72.8%	17.3%	8.6%	1.3%
Funding for extracurricular activities	29.4%	24.1%	46.5%	
Training	53.2%	10.6%	36.2%	
Staffing	59.0%	19.4%	21.1%	.6%
Foreign language assistant	54.7%	16.8%	28.5%	
Class size	31.8%	44.8%	21.7%	1.7%
Pupil grouping	42.1%	34.4%	23.1%	.3%
Pupil ability	36.5%	26.7%	35.1%	1.7%
Formative assessment	74.4%	3.5%	21.9%	.3%
Summative assessment	67.8%	5.3%	26.9%	
Secondary National Strategy	52.3%	3.3%	44.1%	.3%
KS3 Framework for Languages	71.4%	4.0%	24.4%	.3%
Language learning at KS2	41.7%	9.8%	48.2%	.3%
Other constraining or supporting factors	50.0%	44.4%	5.6%	

In schools where languages were compulsory for most or all pupils at KS4, the majority of respondents saw this as a factor which supported effective teaching and learning at KS3 (see Table 8.3). On the other hand, in schools where languages were optional at KS4, the converse was not necessarily the case. While over half (56.5 per cent) did think that optional status was a constraining factor, a further 23.8 per cent thought that it was a supporting factor and 19.7 per cent thought it was neither.

Table 8.3: Compulsory status of languages as constraining or supporting factor (second survey)

Status of languages in the school as supportive or constraining factor	Languages not compulsory in school	Languages compulsory for some in school	Languages compulsory for all or most pupils in school
Supportive factor	53 (23.8%)	10 (41.7%)	85 (83.3%)
Constraining factor	126 (56.5%)	14 (58.3%)	3 (2.9%)
Neither	44 (19.7%)	0	13 (12.7%)
Both	0	0	1 (1%)
Total Count	223	24	102

8.3 The languages teacher as key driver for high standards in language learning

Headteachers primarily focused on the quality of their languages staff as the key to the standard of language learning in their school. When headteachers talked about the high quality of the work of their languages staff they referred to excellence in objective setting, varied teaching styles, and interactivity:

I have watched [X] and [Y] teach and you can only be compelled by the pleasure that the children get. It's compelling. You want to go back for more. And you sit there thinking, 'If I had been taught by someone like this, I would have done languages and I would have understood it'. It is absolutely outstanding. (Headteacher, case study round 1)

A further indicator of excellence was that language teachers were acting as coaches to teachers in their own and other departments in their school. In a few cases heads admitted that there was also some 'mediocre' teaching going on and some difficulty in motivating all learners, but mainly they felt secure in the standard of delivery:

Always when I take a parent around, I know that when I get to the languages department and music department which are neatly side by side, there will be a tremendous sense of energy and fun. There'll be more interactivity going on between the teacher and taught. (Headteacher, case study round 1)

Collaboration as a driver

A recurrent feature of successful professional practice was that high performing teachers were often engaged in collaboration with other teachers. Collaboration with teachers outside the school seemed to provide the stimulus for innovation in the teachers' practice. Such external collaboration most commonly took the form of working with feeder primary schools or in CILT's Strategic Learning Networks (SLN). For instance, one of the teachers interviewed in the second round of case study visits reported on how she increased the use of the target language in her lessons, and developed departmental practice on this issue, as a result of participation in an SLN:

I wanted to develop speaking skills - this is what was chosen by everybody - to become confident and use the target language in context to go one step further to relate to what they have learnt, to transfer this skill and to use language independently So what did I need to do? Using the KS3 Framework, building target language in context in schemes of work, short and long term goals, planning lessons, monitoring success. There is a slot allocated during departmental meetings which means every time I come back I'm being given ten minutes during departmental meetings so that I can feed back on what I have done. (Teacher, case study round 2)

However, involvement alone in SLNs was not necessarily seen as productive. The 2007 survey indicated that of the 56.3 per cent of heads of department who said they were part of an SLN, only 38.3 per cent said this had had some impact on language provision at KS3 and 61 per cent said there had been no impact. This is an indication that isolating individual factors may not give an accurate and full account of the complex interrelationship of factors which inform good practice. In this case, there is evidence that involvement with SLNs combined with the individual enthusiasm of the teacher and the departmental context that fostered sharing of innovative ideas on pedagogy may have provided the appropriate conditions.

Collaboration that took place internally within a school was also a stimulus for high quality teaching and language learning. The case study schools revealed evidence of some creative work being done by languages teachers who had collaborated with colleagues in other departments in their school. Examples included a 'Eurovision Song Contest' with music where pupils wrote and performed songs in the target language, one school where a module of geography was taught through the medium of French. The following languages teacher explains how by collaborating with the history teachers in her school and teaching a series of history lessons in French enhanced the learning of the language by embedding it in a strong context:

We had this trial which was with the History department, I did a month of teaching World War I to Year 9 students that you've seen here today. They responded extremely well; it's teaching the language within a context, it's not teaching the language for languages. And they had vocabularies, it was brilliant... So I went to the history department and got the scheme of work which she was doing at the same time, she was doing lots of facts, of course, and dates. I didn't want to do too much of that so I did a lot of, how would you feel as a soldier during the war, far from your family? Write a letter. So we did a lot of feelings, using the imperfect, I was sad, I was ill, I was cold, all those things. So around the topic, we used the date, the news of the famous battle, and I used a movie which is called Joyeux Noel and around that we worked as well. It was a triumph! (Teacher, case study round 2)

Challenges identified by headteachers

Staffing-related challenges centred around the issue of recruitment and, in particular, retention of high calibre languages staff. In the case study schools headteachers did not on the whole feel confident about being able to recruit equally able teachers, should their staff move on to other posts.

Seven of the case study heads considered the issue of staff cover for maternity and sick leave as a key challenge in the effort to maintain high standards in the provision of language learning for the pupils at their school. A number of different strategies were being implemented which were found to be effective: the use of foreign language assistants or Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) trainees in stepping in for absent colleagues; training non-specialist cover staff for the context of languages lessons; employment of a cover supervisor who worked within the languages department and who focused in particular on pupils whose expected level of performance is borderline grade C/D.:

*The other thing that we've done is appoint XX who is cover supervisor. The cover supervisors are paid at a higher rate than your normal classroom support assistant. They are paid at a higher rate because they can cover lessons and they can work with whole classes, small groups, whatever you want to use them. And we are using her, we are feeling our way towards using her effectively, but what I wanted to take a particular focus is on the KS4 attainment. I want her to be working with key groups of students, crudely, on the C/D borderline. How she works is entirely down to the department but she's withdrawing key students to practise the orals, the mock orals, she's working alongside teachers in the classroom and sometimes she's taking the class when the teacher is taking a group out or when the teacher is out of school [...] We get somebody who is familiar with the department and familiar with the routine and familiar with the kids, so it gives us additional stability.
(Headteacher, case study round 2)*

There was some concern that high performing heads of languages were in danger of burn-out as a result of their high energy commitment to their work, as the following headteacher indicated:

I get the feeling that the language department may just be slightly overreaching itself at the moment in terms of its own energy levels and commitment. [The head of department] is looking very tired, and that's bad news, because if your vibrant head of department is flagging, and getting jaded and tetchy, then that transmits very quickly... And [the head of department] is a hard one to say no to, because she keeps bounding up with new ideas, can we do this, can we do that. (Headteacher, case study round 2)

8.4 Teachers' views on drivers for change

The case study interviews asked heads of department and languages teachers to identify the main sources of influence that had led to improved change in the quality of language teaching and learning in their school. The answers were diverse and in most cases a different agent of change was identified. However, a common theme linking most of them (and echoing the earlier observation on the positive role of collaboration) was that, apart from the work of departmental staff, most teachers saw involvement with an external agency as a key factor. The latter had been effective in the following forms: the presence of NQTs and trainee teachers; involvement in INSET; collaborating on projects through Strategic Learning Networks. One teacher referred to the broadening experience of teaching in Senegal on a summer project for five weeks which led to an awareness of the lack of a need to be totally reliant on resources for language teaching and to a decision to draw more on inner resources to develop a more interactive style of teaching:

I spent the summer in Senegal, teaching in a project, which was really good, for five weeks, and what I've brought back from that is even further: how much you can do without resources. You don't necessarily need to fall back on textbooks and things; and how much you can with... I mean they use a lot of song out there, so I used a bit of that, singing and rhythm. (Teacher, case study round 2)

The role of OFSTED as a positive driver would seem to depend on whether the languages staff saw the inspection as a source of constructive advice rather than a process of evaluation based on fixed inspection criteria. For instance, the following languages department seems to have benefited from the inspector's advice to focus more on the learner and this had led to change in the performance of the department:

On both occasions they said: 'Try and focus more on the learning rather than on the teaching' and I think that kind of has been informing my planning and probably everybody else's as well. (Head of department, case study round 2)

Finally, the head of languages at a case study school with a large multi-ethnic population identified the status of languages within the school community and the role it played in strengthening racial harmony as a key driver for the quality of the work produced in the department:

I think it's because we all have a genuine belief that Modern Languages is of absolutely crucial importance in this school and we think back to three years ago when the now head was my line manager and she said actually to me, 'Justine, you'll have to understand that in a few years time not all children will even be doing French in KS3. What's the point when their English is so bad?' And I was just so flabbergasted, I really was. And I immediately justified it in terms of 'These children are going nowhere without literacy and do you not understand the impact that learning a foreign language is having on literacy?' and I also said that 'With French and Urdu being the languages, do you not see how much we do in the cultural strand to promote tolerance and understanding and everything else?' So I think the impetus to start with comes from the fact that we actually believe that Modern Languages plays a crucial role in holding this place together in terms of racial harmony, in terms of all the community cohesion, the fact that we actually are brave enough to take them out and show them another culture and teach them how to adapt to that culture. (Head of department, case study round 2)

8.5 Pedagogical drivers and challenges

8.5.1 Use of English and the target language

The majority of heads of department, including those in language colleges, reported that there had been a decrease in teacher use of the target language. In some cases this is reported as '*slippage*'; at other times it is justified in terms of never having believed in exclusive use of the target language anyway. In some interviews, the KS3 Framework was explicitly seen as having triggered this decrease, though this is not necessarily presented in a negative way, as the following perceptive comments made by a head of department who sees this effect as part of a long-term opportunity to shift the focus away from focus on teacher use of target language to that of pupil use:

In actual fact we've been aware that since we implemented the KS3 Strategy the amount of target language has actually gone down a little bit which we're actually disappointed with. We did find that as long as we started in Year 7, never deviated from the shared structures we have in the schemes of work, we could actually conduct complete lessons in the target language but

because the quality of what we are doing we think has improved, but this element of challenge has improved, the complicated instructions really that go with thinking skills until they get used to it. Quite often we find that because of the ever-lowering levels of the children we're getting coming to the school, we really have had to incorporate a little bit more English in the language lessons than we would normally want to do. That is as it is at the moment but we're trying to improve, not so much the amount we speak, although that is crucially important, but the amount the children contribute.
(Head of department, case study round 1)

Some teachers were conscious of trying to balance the benefits they perceive in teaching in the target language with a more explicit approach:

I try to have some stuff in there that's French because it's good for them to hear it, because it's right for the sounds, because they should hear the accent, because they should hear the lilt. It has a sound, a flow, the language. But at the same time I try very hard for them not to get lost. I want them to know what they're doing, why they're doing it and how to do it because otherwise they'll just chuck their pen on the desk and abandon ship. [...] So I use a combination of the two because I think in part you can teach it as a subject as well. It doesn't have to be immersion. It can be something which they study.
(Teacher, case study round 1)

Teachers' use of the target language in the lessons observed varied considerably. There was no indication that native-speakers used the target language more or less than other teachers. In the couple of lessons where the teachers were not teaching their specialist language, they described feeling 'less confident' and not having the same 'facility with the language' but were both making a conscious effort to use the classroom phrases they knew. In general, the heads of department and teachers seemed to share common views about the different reasons for using either English or the target language as the medium of communication in lessons. **Use of English** was seen to be important for talking about the target language (and therefore with the increased focus on grammar, there is an increased amount of English being used); if pupils are struggling or worried about some aspect of their learning; and for clarification (including 'self-translation'). In the lessons observed, English was also used to set out the learning objectives at the beginning of most lessons, to discuss how to improve work according to the National Curriculum levels, and to teach language learning strategies. It seems that some teachers used English when they believed pupils should be 'explicitly aware' of their learning. Another important rationale which was made in defence of the use of English is that of the need to establish a rapport with the class, or 'breaking down barriers', as one head of department put it:

I think one of the problems with language teachers is that we speak so much in the foreign language we don't always get to know the pupils in the way we want to. We get to know about their mothers and fathers but not really getting to know them as people because we don't communicate enough with them in English. It might sound like heresy but this thing about actually communicating with a pupil allows you to be a better teacher.
(Head of department, case study round 1)

From a language pedagogical point of view, a positive role of the use of English, encouraged by the Framework, has been a greater emphasis on pupil thinking about connections between English as first language and the target language:

It was something we did before, but we're doing it much more than before. I think a lot of us felt instinctively we should be making those links but felt that it wasn't the way we were being encouraged to teach. But now I think we all do. We are thinking about ourselves as learners, how we like to learn languages and giving the pupils the chance to share in that.
(Head of department, case study round 1)

Examples of this were seen in the lessons observed. In two classes the teachers explained that where there is a circumflex in French, there is often an 's' in English and that knowing this can help learners to understand some unfamiliar words. In another lesson, a pupil raised a question about the meaning of 'tableau', having found several alternatives in the dictionary. The teacher responded with a discussion about homonyms in English and French and the use of context to establish meaning. Another teacher contrasted English and French in terms of grammatical gender, but encouraged the pupils to see parallels with German, the other foreign language they were learning.

About half the teachers interviewed reported using a lot of target language in their teaching. **Use of the target language** was seen to be important in the context of 'everyday classroom language', for conversational work, and development of language around topics. This was seen in the lessons where, to varying degrees, the target language was used for greeting pupils, praise and encouragement, classroom management, and during activities to introduce, consolidate or revise vocabulary. As well as using the target language to praise pupils, a few of the teachers, unusually perhaps, also saw it as appropriate to reprimand misbehaviour. According to one head of department:

We've found that the target language can sometimes be far, far more effective because they don't actually quite know what you're saying to them but you look visibly angry and maybe a little bit more scary if you're using French words that they don't totally understand [...] I think you have to be aware of the right balance of English and target language.
(Head of department, case study round 1)

Teachers who were more in favour of teacher use of the target language and who were seemingly incorporating it more in their lessons also referred to a larger **variety of strategies** in support of its use and reflected a more developed thinking about the pedagogy of target language use:

There's always an action. There's usually a word that's similar so I try and use a cognate if I can. I'll often try and give a pointer before as to what's going to come next. So if we're going to do a listening activity I'll maybe move on and point to what's going to come next in that listening activity and say, 'el futuro' kind of thing and just put in a little word to point them a little bit where we're going to go next. And if they're really struggling, I teach them - I don't know if you've seen - they have their own strategies, that if we're doing the whole Spanish lesson, they can say to me: '¿Cómo se dice en español? ¿Cómo se dice en Inglés?' They've got strategies that they can ask me. And they can quite easily say to me, 'No entiendo. ¿Puede decirlo en inglés?' Something like that. And so they've got strategies. (Teacher, case study round 1)

Strategies used to support pupil use of the target language included the use of rewards , phrase lists and prompts such as whiteboards used as 'target language mats':

And instead of giving out the whiteboards every lesson, we have got one class to make some target language mats so they've no excuse if the mat is given out on their desk. Or if it's a particular child, such as the one you saw this morning that really says very, very little, it's a nice opportunity for them to actually say something in the target language if there's a prompt there on the desk. (Teacher, case study round 1)

There was little spontaneous use of the target language by pupils in most of the lessons observed. There were occasional exceptions, though, in lessons where the teachers were committed to using the target language for significant amounts of classroom communication and pupils were expected to use the target language and given support for this: *'Darf ich trinken?'; '¡Dos minutos!'* In one lesson, an experienced head of department conducted a lesson with a lower ability set including vocabulary presentation and grammar explanations entirely in German. The starter, for example, was a series of lists of words such as 'Frühling, Sommer, Winter, Januar,' from which the learners picked the 'odd one out' and justified their choice. As the learners tried to formulate their answers in German, the teacher supported them, providing the necessary vocabulary and rephrasing as appropriate.

Another head of department made a telling comment on the choice between fluency and grammar knowledge in pupil target language proficiency:

It's interesting because we've got a lad from [another school] in the sixth form [...] he's a bit of a naughty boy but he speaks French fluently. But when I went over some subjunctive actually in English, some of the time he sort of fell about and said: 'I've never, ever had grammar explained to me in English'. And his grammar is poor, funnily enough, but yet he's fluent. He can carry on a conversation about anything. And I think in the scheme of things, I'd rather he could carry on the conversation. (Head of department, case study round 1)

Perceived factors influencing teacher use of the target language

Factors which heads of department picked out as influencing the conditions for teacher use of the target language were as follows.

Age: several said that more teacher use of the target language was incorporated in Year 7 lessons (including 100 per cent target language lessons) but less was used with older pupils. One head of department believed that the 'fear factor' accounted for pupils' decreasing receptivity to classroom target language use:

And I think the fear factor has a lot to do with it as well. For example, some children can cope with - Year 7 groups I have taught the entire lesson in target language and they haven't batted an eyelid because it is part of the currency of learning to cope with a foreign language. Other groups - I have a Year 9 group I would do pretty much the same with. Other groups will freak. It's an immediate shut down of 'Oh my God! She's speaking a funny language. I can't do it. I don't want to know.' (Head of department, case study round 1)

Behaviour: one head of department described how less well behaved classes were likely to be less open to teacher use of the target language. The pupils' inability to understand the teacher in turn fuels their de-motivation:

I feel that if you give them all the instructions in the target language, the kids just don't know what they're doing. And then you get off task behaviour. They're not listening to you; then you spend five to ten minutes getting them back to listen to what you're saying, and getting them back on task. (Head of department, case study round 1)

Ability: teachers reported using the target language more extensively with higher sets than with lower sets. With the latter classes, target language use or more restricted to a few specific functions:

I think there's quite a wide variation between the teachers and between classes. I mean there's huge variation to what we do. You know with a top set I will do a lot of stuff including quite a bit of explanation and quite a bit of grammar stuff as long as it is not too complicated in the target language. Whereas I know with set 4 I do nothing beyond classroom instruction in target language. (Teacher, case study round 1)

With lower ability sets in particular, teachers perceived a need to prioritise establishing positive relationships with the learners:

If you have a typical bottom set of children [in this school] with low aspirations and low self esteem and you come at them in the target language then you've lost them. [...] With very low ability children I don't think it's always a good idea because you want, because eight tenths of your ability to impact these children is establishing a relationship with them which is positive and that happens in the mother tongue. The fact that you understand their jokes and you know their nicknames and you show them that you love them, that all happens in English. (Teacher, case study round 1)

Pupils' views about teacher use of the target language

In contrast to evidence gathered from heads of department and teachers, the pupils reported that the target language was used frequently in their lessons, which indicates that the fact that lesson objectives and linguistic aspects of the teaching were made explicit to pupils did not preclude widespread use of the target language in the classroom. As might be expected, the extent of its use varied from classroom to classroom, with almost all teachers using the target language for classroom instructions, discipline and taking the register, and the majority using it to introduce new topics and themes. Most pupils commented, however, that their teacher would support explanations in the target language with actions and would repeat what had to be done in English after the initial explanation in the target language, in order to make sure that everything was fully understood. The majority of pupils were positive about the use of the target language in the lesson, as these comments show:

You can hear how fluent she is and that really makes you want to do German so you can speak the way she does. But she does speak in English sometimes, obviously, because we don't understand everything already. (Year 8 girl, case study round 1)

She speaks French when she's talking to us. And then if we're like 'what was that?' she'll speak in English. But most of the time she speaks in French. A lot of the time we know what she's saying. (Year 8, girl case study round 1)

She speaks it quite a lot. She says what we're doing and what our subjects are and what we're talking about basically. She does it in French and then translates it into English Sometimes she gives us classroom instructions in French. (Year 8 boy, case study round 1)

A few pupils, however, were not so sure:

Our teacher talks solidly in Spanish and sometimes you don't know what she's trying to get you to do. And she likes to try to get everybody to speak as much Spanish in a lesson even if it's not related to the work but I think you need to have that break or relate it to the English back again because it's easier to remember that way. (Pupil, focus group case study round 1)

I remember our first Spanish lesson our teacher walked in and just started speaking Spanish and we just had to sit there and we didn't know what was going on. We got it in the end but if she just told us in English and started speaking in Spanish, it would have been done a lot quicker and it would have been easier. (Pupil, focus group case study round 1)

They say loads of stuff and you don't understand any of the things that they've said, so you'll pick up one or two things that you know and that's it. (Year 8 boy, case study round 1)

In addition to this, there were differing views from a few pupils on the value of having a teacher who was a native speaker, with some saying it helped pronunciation and others saying that native speakers spoke too fast for them to understand.

It is clear that classroom target language use is an important driver for effective language teaching and learning but that it continues to pose challenges to many teachers and pupils.

8.5.2 Focus on grammar

The discussion in this section also draws on case study interview data and observation of lessons. There was almost unanimous agreement that in recent years, following the introduction of the KS3 Framework, there has been an increased focus on grammar in language teaching at this level. In the few cases of heads of department who said there was no increase, they said this was because they had always focused on it a lot anyway and had never gone down the '*communicative road*' in the first place. What is evident in the heads of department' discussion of this topic is that the overwhelming conception of grammar in the teachers' minds is narrow and traditional: namely, formal grammar as abstract rules underlying normative use of the target language. Grammar here is not seen, as in most current second language acquisition research, as the individual 'grammars' or linguistic systems which learners construct as they progress in their learning of the target language. The heads of department' focus is very largely on pedagogy rather than on language acquisition by the pupils.

More than half of the lessons observed included explicit grammar teaching. Often the grammar was presented in the context of the content focus of the lesson, such as teaching *mon, ma* and *mes* in a French lesson introducing family members, or *al* and *la* in a Spanish lesson about places to go to in town. Sometimes, however, the grammar was completely decontextualised. In one class pupils were taught to sing French possessive pronouns. Another teacher in the same school asked pupils to correct ten inaccurate sentences in the perfect tense. She then handed out individual whiteboards and asked pupils to write the past participle for a number of verbs.

As well as the explicit teaching of rules, the heads of department pointed to a return to the use of traditional, formal grammatical terminology: '*We talk to them in grammatical terms now. We don't say a verb's a doing word. We explain.*' This was evident in a number of the lessons observed. For example the learning objectives for one class were: to be able to identify a noun; to understand that words can be masculine and feminine; and to know that this is called gender.

The strong approval for the return to grammar was often expressed in terms of a rejection of the perceived view of the previously dominant methodology, communicative language teaching, which was seen as having wrongly downplayed the role of grammar teaching. Communicative language teaching was represented as the rote learning of chunks of language which learners were unable to manipulate: *'The kids just had to memorise loads and did not actually get anything out of it. They couldn't be creative,'* and *'they didn't know the very basics of grammar so they could never build their own sentences.'* It is clear that this whole area of debate and research was unclear in the minds of many teachers, leading to pedagogical decisions which may result in unorthodox teaching approaches, such as the use of transliteration in KS3 language lessons:

One thing we're doing this year which is quite interesting is transliterating a lot [...] For example; 'Last week have I with my brother in the park gewent'. Sorry, I mean: 'have I with my brother in the park tennis geplayed'. And actually teaching them that as a way of remembering the word order.
(Teacher, case study round 1)

The same teacher also justified the focus on grammar in terms of developing the pupils' thinking skills *'by working rules out for themselves'*. What may be happening here is that the languages teachers are focussing on the generic teaching and learning dimensions of the Framework as surface pedagogical performance in the classroom without sufficiently considering how these principles are reflected in the cognitive acquisition of the target language by their pupils. On the other hand, there was some, though scant, evidence of heads of department and teachers making a connection between grammar teaching objectives and the pupils' communicative needs:

And where we've found that they couldn't cope with the amount that we were trying to offer, we've just tried to be critical and reduce the quantity to the actual key things that are going to be of actual practical use for them and that they're going to have to know to cope with the exams, and have to know in order to be able to communicate. (Head of department, case study round 1)

Unless you mix [grammar teaching] with a communicative approach, students who you explain to them rules, given with the games, they come back a week after they forget the rules. So you need to put it into practice with students using it as often as possible. (Head of department, case study round 1)

From the discussions with case study pupils at interview, it was clear that the majority of the 96 pupils interviewed were aware of the purpose of learning grammar and that grammatical concepts had been made explicit to them. Grammatical activities of which they were aware included, for example, work at word level on genders and plurals and work at sentence level, on word endings, agreements and tense construction. Pupils were also able to use metalanguage to discuss the grammar teaching and learning, as can be seen below:

You can talk about things that have happened in the past and the future, what you think'll happen in the future and what's happening in the present. Instead of just saying 'I play this', you could say 'I have played this'.
(Year 8 boy, case study round 1)

We learn the endings of words, masculine and feminine and if you're describing masculine and feminine words, the endings of the colours changes.
(Year 8 boy, case study round 1)

I like just learning new vocab to see what patterns are in the new vocab, so if you had a pronoun and you had to put a verb with it, how the verb changes throughout each pronoun. (Year 8 girl, case study round 1)

You pick up certain things each time she speaks it, like connectives and stuff and that helps you put it into sentences (Boy, focus group case study round 1)

Of particular interest were the frequent references made to the progression from word level work to more complex work on building sentences and even texts, which indicates that the KS3 Framework is having an impact on pupils' understanding of their own learning. The following quotations, for instance, reveal implicit awareness of principles in learning to construct sentences; namely, the connection of different parts and the integration of new and known vocabulary:

We've learnt how to say stuff like 'I go' or 'I play' and stuff like that, so that we manage to say 'I play football on the weekends with my friends' and make basic sentences and then we go into more complex sentences and then paragraphs. (Year 8 boy, case study round 1)

You learn the words and then you put them into phrases with other words that you already know about. (Year 8, girl case study round 1)

She teaches us the easy bit first and then we have to put it into a sentence like a simple sentence and then she'll make us write a paragraph or something about it so she knows you've learnt it properly. (Boy, focus group case study year 1)

We'll move onto something else and then we'll try and put both things together and if it's like how to say I went and then I went to the shops and then we'll put it together so you'll have to say it all in one sentence. (Year 8 girl, case study round 1)

The focus on grammar in the languages classroom seems to be impacting on the pupils' conscious learning of the target language. The evidence from teachers and pupils in the study supports the view that, when used appropriately and in combination with productive pupil use of the target language, focus on form facilitates learners' greater independence in manipulating the language.

8.5.3 Interactive learning

A third category of effective practice at KS3 identified by the teachers was that of **interaction**. This feature was seen to be embodied in the implementation of interactive tasks in lessons such as the use of games and songs. The tasks in themselves are not interactive but appropriate pedagogical methodologies can be, as in the following example of the use of song and mime in lessons that bears different pupil learning styles in mind:

Year 9s we did last week [...] we did 'il faut baisser le radiateur' [demonstrates with rhythm], 'il faut éteindre la lumière'; so we did all gestures and it's a really good way of doing it. Obviously there are some students that are not kinaesthetic, or whatever you want to call it, so that's why I always have something visual for them to look at and also they're listening to what I'm saying and pronouncing. So we're very lucky in languages in the fact that you can use this kind of scatter gun effect. (Teacher, case study round 1)

With increased emphasis on 'active learning' through 'activities that appeal to all different types of learners,' a few teachers perceived a shift in their role from teaching to facilitating learning:

There is quite an emphasis on learning, perhaps more emphasis than on the teaching now. We are more facilitators, I think, and the aim is to get kids to participate more actively, kinaesthetically. There's been a lot of talk about different learning styles and we have tried to adapt to that.
(Teacher, case study round 1)

Another important vehicle for interaction in lessons referred to by some heads of department is ICT, and in particular interactive whiteboards (IWBs): 'I think they've got huge potential.' Again it was their integration in lessons and their linked use with other forms of pupil engagement in lessons which were seen as key factors:

I can go from an interactive exercise on the internet to looking at...If you're doing a worksheet with them, you can actually put that onto the board instead of holding up the small piece of paper and saying 'put something in here'. You've actually got a large version of it that they can all see. Also they're getting up and coming to the front. (Teacher, case study round 1)

Many headteachers mentioned that languages teachers were amongst the most likely teachers in their schools to have harnessed the potential of the new technology, and this was confirmed in the observations where an Interactive Whiteboard or data projector was used in almost every lesson observed. In most cases the languages teachers had prepared games or activities to present, consolidate or revise vocabulary in ways that engaged the pupils' interest and attention. Typical activities included choral repetition and games like 'noughts and crosses' and 'battleships'. The IWB or data projector was also used to support explicit grammar teaching. Activities observed included a gap-fill exercise focusing on the prepositions *au*, *en* and *aux* with countries and a PowerPoint presentation illustrating how to form the perfect tense with *-er* verbs in French. One teacher structured a lesson around a game of 'Who wants to be a Millionaire?' with questions about wide-ranging aspects of French grammar.

One of the case study schools was a Maths and Computing College. Out of the specialist college funding, the languages department had received an ICT suite with an IWB and personal computers for the pupils. The head of department was particularly committed to exploiting ICT in languages teaching and learning. In the Spanish lesson observed, she introduced the topic of *tapas* with a PowerPoint presentation about its place in Spanish life and with photographs of popular *tapas* dishes. The pupils were then set a series of short tasks to be completed individually at the PCs. These included vocabulary reinforcement, inductive grammar, listening and speaking exercises. The pupils also used a menu of a Spanish website as the stimulus for a role play. When viewed as part of a broader interactive approach to language teaching, ICT was seen as a driver for higher quality learning experience for the pupils.

8.5.4 The content of language teaching: creating a context for learning

Finally, another feature of effective practice evident in some of the schools was that of creating a context for language learning by carefully selecting topics aimed at drawing the pupils' attention to the thematic focus. The majority of heads of department believed that the KS3 Framework for languages supported the incorporation of cultural and linguistic objectives in foreign language teaching at this level: 'I find it very difficult to teach a language in isolation from the culture so I think, yes, it helps because it's there so you feel justified in taking a bit of time out to talk about certain things.' Most heads of department therefore

reported an increasing focus on culture in their department. Even in the instances where this was not yet happening much, the heads of department indicated that it was something for future departmental development. One aspect of this context was the focus on a carefully chosen theme from the target culture and using this as the vehicle for the language teaching and learning:

We've also been bringing in a much stronger cultural element [...]. We've really hit that in a big way. We haven't necessarily done the geographical bit in the way it says in the Framework, though it's covered. But we've got the geographical bit very clearly in Year 8. In Year 8 we've been looking at Paris as the capital city and that's been the theme for the whole of the Year 8 French course, and in Spanish it's Valencia because that's where we do our exchange: communications in Valencia, the festivals, getting on to the internet and train tickets. (Head of department, case study round 1)

Another teacher sought to establish the context for learning through the social interactions within the classroom, emphasising the need to learn the target language through 'real' communication in lessons as well as for building relationships with people abroad:

Languages are meant to be fun, they're meant to be social kind of learning. And if you can do that, if they can experience that then it takes them up. It's not monotonous then. It's not kind of 'sit there learning vocabulary' and I think it's maintaining that and keep them enthusiastic and giving them real situations where they can use it and then they actually enjoy it. [...] Well, they do do role plays and they do have conversations with each other. And at the end of every topic we have the speaking assessments where I ask them questions about themselves so I'll ask where they live, what they like doing. And I'll say, that's a real - you know, you could go away on holiday and meet somebody and that's a good way to introduce yourself, get to know each other. (Teacher, case study round 1)

Another aspect of this context was that of defining a more 'adult footing'. This was done through the focus on contemporary issues such as the environment, the media and health: 'Those are things we used to do in KS4. We've brought those through into Year 9 to try to put the whole of language learning on a much more adult footing.' An example of this was seen in one of the French lessons observed. Using a conventional world map and one based on the Peterson projection, the teacher stimulated a class discussion in French about the perceived importance of countries in Europe and Africa before introducing reading and listening exercises through which the pupils learnt about aspects of the culture and climate of Burkina Faso. The pupils were engaged by the content of the lesson and were also developing language learning strategies such as recognising cognates and establishing the meaning of unfamiliar words from context.

Establishing a context for learning was also done through the use of authentic texts, drawn in part from the internet, and often relating to the exchange link:

The second unit in Year 8 we've built around a visit to the science city in Valencia simply because it's a place we go to with the exchange. That's a wonderful website showing the different buildings, what it looks like, what we're trying to do; so you've got the visual impact to provide the context of what you're doing. The topic there was parts of the body and there was an exhibition there about bones so we had a dinosaur with these different bones in different parts of the body. 'What's wrong with you', things like that and then ending with writing up about the visit to the science city and that linked on to something to do with dolphins because there's a dolphin show and when I

went to Spain I videoed that. I like dolphin shows and it's quite useful for teaching - the children like it. And we talked about a day in the life of a dolphin trainer. In fact you can see some of that on the board. Talking about dolphins, all the contexts are there: that was daily routine, what you did yesterday, what the tourists will do tomorrow when they go there. So the context was there; it was linked with something they did themselves when they went on the exchange but providing the more traditional linguistic elements as well as something that provides greater scope for narrative.
(Head of department, case study round 1)

Another school was experimenting with teaching CBLC German course at KS3, using the vocational context to give the teaching and learning a more adult feel. The school had established links with a German car manufacturing company, which contributed to the school's European Day of Languages and provided a day of German activities for local schools, and was discussing the possibility of pupils undertaking language-based work placements with the firm.

In summary, there was great diversity in the extent to which focus on thematic content is being carried out in the case study schools. At one end of the spectrum, the teachers simply relied on the textbooks being used (e.g. *Expo* or *Équipe*) for coverage of culture. At the other end, one school has constructed detailed schemes of work for French and Spanish, with accompanying booklets of activities and information for their pupils, which link language learning with authentic cultural topics (representing both high and low categories of culture). For instance, in Year 9 Spanish reading comprehension reinforcing the use of the preterite tense was done using texts about Salvador Dalí, as well as activities involving pupil internet searches on Dalí.

The following is a list of other ways in which the schools reported incorporating culture in their foreign language teaching:

- Inclusion of geographical topics in the schemes of work (e.g. French, German, or Spanish speaking countries in the world); special cities or regions in the target country; festivals.
- Content-based teaching (at a languages college, one unit of work in the geography department is being taught in French: the pupils 'love it').
- Year 9 pupils interviewing the French foreign language assistant (including schools in France and the Mai '68 revolution: '*He was amazing and the kids in this low ability Year 9 French group [...] were absolutely amazed at some of the things he was talking about*').
- Cross-curricular links, such as a focus on food with the school science department.

Linking language learning with global issues, such as poverty: '*So, for example, I had like an overhead with a little, tiny, starved black child's hand on a long white hand, and just pulled it off and they had to guess. And they talked about that, then talked about countries and talked about food and talked about problems [...] And that was all in French.*'
(Head of department, case study round 1)

- ICT was seen as a valuable tool for strengthening cultural awareness in language pedagogy: *'For example, in Year 7 we've got food coming in, daily routine. There's a wonderful site that was launched last autumn in Spain which has a questionnaire for primary school children in Spain. How many times a day do you drink milk, water or whatever it may be [...] we've been using that kind of resource, not school-made resources but things that are actually being used in Spain.'* (Head of department, case study round 1)

In sum, while the surveys did not suggest widespread integration of cultural and linguistic objectives in lessons, some case study schools showed evidence of doing this increasingly and creatively, as the examples above indicate.

8.6 Pupils' views: what they enjoy in language lessons

Pupils indicated that the most enjoyable aspects of their language lessons were activities where they were able to interact with each other or the teacher, such as games, role plays and work on the interactive whiteboard, as indicated by the following selection of comments:

All the activities you do are really fun and we get to work in groups and teams and make posters and games and it's really fun.
(Year 8 girl, case study round 1)

Our lessons are fun because we don't just do book work and written work. We use the overhead projector and we do songs and games.
(Boy, focus group case study round 1)

I like it when we do role plays and it's interactive cos I don't like it when we just sit down and just copy from books. I like to do something as well as just listen to the teacher. (Year 8 girl, case study round 1)

A few pupils also commented that they enjoyed learning vocabulary, grammar and writing activities:

I like learning new words and vocabulary and stuff like that. And connectors, like connecting things together. And writing sentences and paragraphs.
(Year 8 boy, case study round 1)

I don't even mind really writing much either. You know, story board template, and we'll write the perfect tense, do a picture and do the writing next to it.
(Year 8 girl, case study round 1)

Pupil comments about what they did not enjoy in language lessons tended to refer to some form of writing activity, such as copying from the board or textbooks, using worksheets, tests and working on their own, or, in a small number of cases, speaking the language in front of the rest of the class:

I don't like it when we just sit down and just copy from books.
(Year 8 boy, case study round 1)

I don't really like writing stuff down because it doesn't stay in your mind that often and things aren't pronounced like they're written down in German.
(Year 8 girl, case study round 1)

I don't like it when we have to work independently and I don't understand what we're doing. (Year 8 girl, case study round 1)

*Standing up and trying to say the French in front of everybody. It's like scary standing up and trying to say the French words. It's quite scary.
(Year 8 girl, case study round 1)*

The findings indicate a marked pupil preference for interactive language lessons as described above. Interaction seemed to appeal to language learners of this age group for two reasons: because it allows for enjoyable active involvement as opposed to more passive consumption of information and repetition of drill practice; and because it often focuses the pupils' attention on the content of the activities rather than the language per se. For some pupils, independent learning and language performance in the classroom was a daunting experience.

8.7 What helps or does not help learning

When asked to describe what they found particularly helpful when learning a foreign language, pupils tended to refer to the same activities as those they had identified as being enjoyable ones, such as games in the classroom and on the interactive whiteboard, role plays and group activities, activities involving pictures and associated vocabulary, rhymes and songs, and actions. All these, it was felt, helped pupils to remember vocabulary and improve pronunciation, as these pupils explained:

Games are good cos you always understand more when there's games and pictures involved cos you remember them more. [girl]

Pictures help you learn, because it's saved in your head. If you remember the picture and you remember. Games help you, because if you play a game over and over again you keep it in your head. (Year 8 girl, case study round 1)

Making it fun cos otherwise if you find it boring you won't enjoy learning the language, but if it's fun you like to go to the lesson, you like to learn. Having fun at the same time as working hard. (Year 8 boy, case study round 1)

You're actually saying the words as well, like when he keeps saying Mull, Mull, Mull, Wasser, Wasser, Wasser, it just gets stuck in your head and the actions he made up were pretty good. (Year 8 boy, case study round 1)

Pupils also said that frequent revision, grammatical explanations and a clear lesson structure helped them to learn, as this girl explained: *'At the start she'll do a lesson plan, so that always helps you cos you know what you're learning and you know you've got time given to do things in.'*

The most frequently mentioned factor that impeded their learning was disruptive behaviour in class. Specific classroom activities which were described by different pupils as unhelpful included copying from the board or working from textbooks was not helpful, listening exercises, reading out loud, tests, the use of supply or student teachers, some games, lack of repetition, too much repetition, pair work with people they did not know, and inadequate explanation.

8.8 Conclusion

Itemising a list of key drivers of and challenges to higher standards in language learning is not a straightforward procedure. Firstly, as can be seen from the evidence reported in this chapter, perceptions of the different stakeholders vary both between groups and within groups. Secondly, it is also clear that individual factors rarely have a determining effect in isolation; more commonly it is a combination of factors that conspire to support or constrain the flourishing of effective language teaching and learning in school. Nevertheless, the following is an outline summary of the main criteria affecting the quality of language provision that have emerged from this research:

- The commitment, and ability of languages teachers;
- The recruitment and retention of high quality languages teachers;
- The support for languages shown by senior leadership in school;
- The status of foreign language learning in the school and the wider community;
- The engagement of languages staff in networking and collaboration with teachers from other schools;
- The engagement of languages staff in interdisciplinary collaboration with other departments in their school;
- A clear understanding of how grammar teaching and communicative language teaching can be integrated;
- A pedagogical focus on the pupil as a language acquirer as opposed to a mere recipient of transmitted knowledge.

9 Conclusion and implications

The findings discussed in this report have depicted the main features of current provision of languages at KS3 in England. By identifying a core sample of respondents who returned questionnaires in both years of the study, it was possible to examine the extent to which there has been change in the practices of schools and the perceptions of heads of languages over the intervening year. Similarly, the iterative nature of the case study visits over two years provides some insight into patterns of change in the impact of the policies on schools. As might be expected, there is no evidence of dramatic changes in practice or perception between the two years. Nevertheless there appear to be signs of movement in some areas more than others. The report ends by briefly reflecting on the extent of impact in the four areas of policy initiatives focused on and by considering the implications for future development.

The KS3 Framework for Modern Languages

This study has revealed evidence of strong approval for the Framework from the overwhelming majority of languages teachers as represented by the survey samples and by the teachers at the case study schools. Policy impact is not exclusively a transmissive phenomenon but depends also on processes of reception and assimilation. In this case, there is strong evidence in the study that curricular policy as represented by the Framework relies on the extent to which it is in tune with teachers' pedagogical beliefs and preferences about language teaching.

On some issues, such as explicitness of teaching approach and focus on grammar, the Framework is transforming classroom practice and reinforcing existing good practice. On other issues, such as the communicative focus of lessons and teaching the language through the medium of authentic cultural stimuli, the initiative has not had a positive impact and may in some cases where a focus has shifted to grammar and structure, be having an unintended constraining effect. In the case study sample there were some examples of innovative practice in using culture as a resource in language lessons. For this practice to become a more widespread feature of language teaching at KS3, further official encouragement and training, for example via the intercultural strand of the forthcoming revised MFL KS3 Framework, will play an important role.

Primary Modern Foreign Languages.

Whilst there was virtually universal approval in the secondary sector for the principle of languages teaching in KS2, managing progression in the learning experience of pupils has proved difficult for many schools and has weakened the impact that this initiative might have had on the KS3 curriculum.

From a secondary school perspective it would seem that for successful cross-sector impact to take place, heads of languages and their departments need to engage with their primary feeder schools in the planning of language provision. It is likely that the revised version of the KS3 Framework currently being developed by the DCSF which aligns it more closely to the KS2 Framework will be seen as helpful in supporting continuity and coherence of progression of teaching and learning across the sectors.

There is evidence in the data of secondary schools' growing awareness of and engagement with what is happening in their feeder primaries. Equally some of the case study secondary languages teachers revealed a readiness and receptivity to styles of teaching that have been promoted in the primary language learning context. The correlation between experience of teaching-related liaison with feeder primary schools and positive impact on language learning at Year 7 and beyond at KS3, suggests that benefits from the primary initiative will best be

generated by active involvement of secondary teachers in the process. Without more widespread development of personal experience of key players, it is likely that discontinuity, repetition and general lack of communication will continue to characterise transition between KS2 and KS3 in many schools.

Specialist Language Colleges

The study revealed a strong demarcation between the, on the whole, very positive effect that SLC status has had on the schools that have been awarded this status and the largely negligible effect that these schools have had on other secondary schools. While many SLCs worked creatively and intensively with their local primary schools, there was little evidence of relations with other secondary schools. Although there are tensions between the need for SLC staff to attend to the needs of their own schools and the outreach duties that come with specialist status, more thinking needs to be done about how secondary schools in general could benefit from improved liaison with SLCs.

The surveys have indicated that the impact of SLC status has been felt primarily in areas of resource provision rather than enhancement of pedagogy. This is not to say that pedagogy has not developed as a result of the award of SLC status, but that heads of department made no explicit connection between the two.

On the whole, the notion of 'specialist status' does not seem to have been exploited by schools with regard to how the school specialism might contribute to the development of other subjects in a school. The evidence from the case studies suggests that headteachers need to consider ways in which expertise and innovation deriving from the award of specialist status might inform the development of teaching and learning in all subjects including languages.

This study underlined the central importance of the notion of 'status of languages' not least because it played a key role in pupils' perceptions of language learning and in their decisions about continuing their study at KS4. The 'visibility' of languages in the curriculum had a key role to play in the perceptions of the subject's status, and whilst this was generally buoyant in SLCs, surveys and case study interviews suggested that languages was becoming less visible in other schools, particularly due to its often optional status in KS4.

Languages uptake at KS4

Finally, the area which remains most discouraging is that of uptake of languages at KS4 where, according to the core sample, in 30 per cent of schools a quarter or less of the Year 10 pupils studied a foreign language in 2007. Even more disappointingly, only a quarter of the heads of department reported that a benchmark for uptake at KS4 had been set in their school. It would appear from these figures that more proactive work will be needed if language learning is to continue beyond KS3 for the majority of pupils in schools in England. The low figures reflect the national statistics indicating a dramatic decline in GCSE entries since the introduction of the policy initiative that lifted the requirement to study a foreign language post KS3.

The study has reported on ways in which schools have been striving to boost uptake and have indicated that the most commonly held view among both headteachers and languages teachers is that this is best done through providing motivating and effective lessons at KS3 which will encourage pupils to want to continue with the subject into KS4. While such a focus on intrinsic enjoyment and learning value is laudable the structural constraints of timetabling should not be underestimated, particularly where compulsory requirements of subject choice in non-language specialist schools, limit pupil choice beyond the control of languages teachers. The study also reported on the development of an impact of KS4 policy on the provision of KS3 language curriculum in schools, such as the introduction of GCSEs in Year 9.

To conclude, the series of recent educational policies that have affected foreign language provision in schools has impacted in different ways and on different levels of the practice and outcomes of language teaching and learning at KS3. It remains to be seen, however, which of them will have the most durable effect on the long term development of foreign language education in this country.

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