

The changing landscape of languages

An evaluation of language learning 2004/2007

The report evaluates the strengths and weaknesses in modern languages from survey inspections of primary and secondary schools, initial teacher education and adult education between 2004 and 2007. It does so at a time of rapid change. In primary schools, provision for languages is increasing year on year. Yet in secondary schools the take-up from age 14 is rapidly declining, and there is major public concern about the decrease in the number of young people able to speak a language other than English. Part A of the report focuses predominantly on the issues arising from the inspection of secondary languages. Part B reflects mainly on developments which arose from the National Languages Strategy published in 2002.

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Executive summary

This report uses evidence from Ofsted's 2004–2007 modern languages inspections and whole-school inspections. It also draws on evidence from visits and telephone calls to initial teacher education providers during 2006/07, visits to providers of extension courses, and *Languages for adults: overcoming the barriers*, which is the Adult Learning Inspectorate's 2006 report on languages in adult education.¹

Part A focuses on students' standards and achievement in modern languages in secondary schools. Standards have improved in Key Stages 3 and 4 and post-16 during the period covered by the report. However, average Key Stage 3 results from teacher assessments remain well below those of other subjects. Key Stage 4 results have improved, although the number of students studying languages is much reduced, largely because the subject is no longer statutory. The trend in improved A-level results has continued.

Key Stage 3 students' progress is generally satisfactory; examination objectives focus the teaching in Key Stage 4 and post-16 and progress is more rapid. Across all phases speaking is the least well developed of all the skills. Students' inability to be able to say what they want to say in a new language has a negative impact on their confidence and enthusiasm.

The report highlights the areas that need to be tackled if standards in modern languages are to rise. In Key Stage 3, in particular, progress is slower than it should be where work is insufficiently demanding, where marking and assessment do not help students to improve and where the content is not sufficiently interesting and relevant. When a second language is introduced, this is sometimes at the expense of time allocated for the first language and so progress in both is not as good as it might be.

Part A reports on the outcomes of the inspection of initial teacher education for language teaching in secondary schools, the quality of extension courses for potential trainees, and training to extend the range of languages taught beyond French, German and Spanish. The quality of a large majority of initial teacher education courses was at least good and it continues to improve. The content of courses has been updated successfully to meet changes in national requirements and current developments. Recently, courses have begun to cover developments such as languages in primary schools and the Every Child Matters agenda.² Most of the courses recruit fewer trainees than their allocation allows and employment-based training routes do not equip trainees as well as others. The recent extension courses, provided by universities to enable potential trainees to teach more than one

¹ The Adult Learning Inspectorate was one of the inspectorates that formed the new Ofsted on 1 April 2007. The report is available as a microsite via the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/20071016.

² For further reading on Every Child Matters visit its site: www.everychildmatters.gov.uk.

language, are of good quality. There is a shortage of initial teacher education provision for teachers of a wider range of languages, but those who have followed such training teach well and are valued by their schools.

Part B considers areas that have sprung from *Languages for All: Languages for Life*, the National Languages Strategy document, which was published in 2002.³ The report evaluates how well primary schools are developing modern languages and the progress they are making to ensure that all pupils in Key Stage 2 are able to study a language. The large majority of schools are already providing a language in Key Stage 2 to one or more year groups. Of the schools in the survey, all were making at least satisfactory progress and just over half were making good progress.

Part B also reports on a recent survey of initial teacher education for teachers of languages in primary schools. The courses surveyed were generally of good quality, with enthusiastic, well trained trainees.

The decline in the take-up of languages in Key Stage 4 reached such a point that, in October 2006, the Government called for a national review. Key factors in the decline have been the experience of learning a language in Key Stage 3 and the broadening of the post-14 curriculum to give a wider choice of interesting options. In schools that maintained high numbers of students studying languages, teaching was good, leadership at all levels was at least good and there was a very good climate for learning languages.

The report briefly explores provision in specialist language schools.

Finally, the report looks at the paradox between the buoyant demand by adults for language learning and the waning quality and quantity of provision.

Key findings

- Students' attainment in modern languages is better in Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3, where results in teacher assessments remain well below those of other foundation subjects. GCSE results have improved since 2004 and compare favourably with other subjects. However, the number of students taking both GCSE French and German, the most taught languages, has declined rapidly over this period.
- The secondary teachers in the survey had good subject knowledge and enabled high attaining students to develop a sound knowledge of grammar. A good range of extra-curricular activities and study visits enhanced learning in most of the schools visited.

³ This sets out the Government's plans to transform the country's capability in languages. Available from www.dcsf.gov.uk/languagesstrategy

- Common weaknesses in provision for secondary modern languages included insufficient opportunities to develop good speaking skills or independent speaking and writing. Students' speaking skills were an area of particular weakness in both key stages. The National Curriculum programme of study was not always fully covered in Key Stage 3 and students did not have enough opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT). The way in which students' work was marked was unhelpful, especially in Key Stage 3, and assessment data were not used effectively to set targets.
- Take-up in Key Stage 4 declined considerably in most schools when the subject was no longer statutory. Very few schools in the survey had set a benchmark or made formal plans to improve it, as requested by the then schools minister Jacqui Smith in December 2005.⁴ Few of the secondary schools in the survey had made effective provision for students who arrived from primary schools with knowledge of another language.
- Just over half the primary schools surveyed were making good progress in implementing languages, although they did not always provide sufficient time for language learning. The teachers were enthusiastic, planned lessons well and used resources effectively. The pupils enjoyed learning a new language and understood its importance, although few of the schools drew on pupils' home and heritage languages and cultures to develop knowledge about language. Sustainability of provision including staffing was still not assured in about half the schools and most had not tackled assessment and progression to Key Stage 3. Monitoring and evaluation were at very early stages.
- Most post-graduate teacher training (PGCE) courses for language specialists in primary schools provided at least good quality training. However, in primary and secondary PGCE courses, the quality of mentoring in schools varied too much. Provision for PGCE courses in a wider range of languages and community languages remains very limited.^{5,6}
- A number of barriers exist that impede good quality language provision for adults. The number of adult learners continues to decline despite buoyant demand.

⁴ www.dcsf.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2005_0159. Letter sent to schools on 27 January 2006.

⁵ Not including French, German, Irish, Spanish and Welsh.

⁶ The term 'community languages' is used where the majority of the learners have an affinity with the language through their ethnic background, although they may not be able to speak or read it fluently. See *Every language matters* (070030), Ofsted, 2008; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070030.

Recommendations

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) should:

- continue to resource the training of primary school staff to teach languages, provide funding for the initial training of primary language teachers and ensure that primary schools plan for sustainable models of provision, particularly regarding transition to Key Stage 3
- ensure that the proposed Open School for Languages provides extensive support and resources for teachers and learners in a wide range of languages to ensure that language learning is exciting, learners wish to continue beyond Key Stage 3 and standards improve in all phases⁷
- ensure that languages tutors for adult learners have access to suitable qualifications and training, and that national, regional and local databases of provision at each level are created.

The Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) should:

- ensure that professional development programmes help teachers to tackle the key weaknesses identified in this report
- promote opportunities for primary and secondary trainees to work together on transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 and for secondary trainees to understand the approach to languages teaching in primary schools
- provide clear guidance to providers of initial teacher education on improving the quality of mentoring; and how flexible courses could be made available in PGCE community languages.

Local learning and skills councils should:

- ensure that tutors of languages for adult learners have access to suitable qualifications and training
- ensure that there is a strategic plan of adult language learning provision across their regions that provides for language diversity and progression routes, and is transparent to learners.

Primary and secondary schools should:

- on the basis of accurate self-evaluation, tackle the weaknesses identified in this report as necessary, using the identified good practice to improve provision and outcomes.

⁷ For more about the Open School for Languages see www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/subjects/languages/languagesreview.

Providers of language learning for adults should:

- ensure that their provision is tailored to meet the varied needs of their adult learners.

Background and context

1. The landscape for learning languages has changed dramatically over the past decade. The Nuffield Languages Inquiry (1998–2000) was established to review capability in languages, given the general lack of enthusiasm for learning foreign languages, the decline in post-16 take-up, including at degree level, and individuals' reliance on the global role of English.⁸ At that time the decline in the number of post-16 students studying languages was continuing, with only 5% of those taking GCSE studying at A level, and only 3% of students enrolled on first degree courses studying languages. The report concluded that, 'We need to aim higher and deliver better' and made several proposals, including driving forward a national strategy.
2. The National Languages Strategy came to fruition in *Languages for All: Languages for Life* with some long-term objectives:
 - improvement in teaching and learning
 - provision of an entitlement to language learning for all pupils in Key Stage 2
 - introduction of a system to give all learners recognition for their language skills
 - increasing the number of people learning languages beyond school.
3. The strategy also announced the forthcoming amendment of the statutory requirement at Key Stage 4 to make way for a more flexible 14–19 curriculum. Annex 1 sets out the intended outcomes of the strategy. This report evaluates the extent to which inspection evidence suggests that these outcomes are being achieved.
4. With the strategy came investment to support:
 - the introduction of primary languages
 - the development of best practice through the Key Stage 3 strategy and a framework for teaching modern foreign languages
 - increasing teacher supply and professional development
 - the development of a national recognition scheme.

⁸ *Languages: the next generation. The final report and recommendations of the Nuffield Languages Inquiry*, the Nuffield Foundation, 2000;
<http://languages.nuffieldfoundation.org/languages/inquiry/in0000000555.asp>.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England was expected to support the strategy; local authorities (LAs) were asked to construct adult learning plans to reflect it and increase the demand from adults.

5. Headway was made in various areas.
 - The Government funded 19 pathfinders – partnerships between local education authorities, schools and other key partners – to develop ways of teaching languages in primary schools.⁹
 - Higher education institutions were funded to introduce specialist language units into their primary ITT courses.¹⁰
 - A Key Stage 3 strategy for languages with a Key Stage 3 framework for teaching languages was developed including training for teachers.¹¹
 - More recently, funding has been provided to develop the Key Stage 3 strategy further, including training and online materials, and to provide support for primary schools to teach a language at Key Stage 2.
6. However, since September 2004, when languages became optional in Key Stage 4, a very rapid decline followed in the take-up of a language by 14-year-olds.
7. In a survey of 28 countries published in 2005 by the European Commission, the United Kingdom was reported as bottom of the league in terms of its competence in other languages.¹²
8. The decline in Key Stage 4 was so significant that in December 2005 the then schools minister Jacqui Smith requested that secondary schools set a benchmark. Her subsequent January 2006 letter to all secondary schools asked them to set a benchmark of between 50% and 90% for increasing the take-up of languages in Key Stage 4 and to evaluate the school's progress in their self-evaluation form.¹³ In October 2006 Lord Dearing was asked to undertake a languages review with the objective of making recommendations to arrest the decline. His recommendations were published in March 2007 and are currently being put into practice.¹⁴

⁹ *Implementing languages entitlement in primary schools, an evaluation of progress in 10 pathfinder LEAs* (HMI 2476), Ofsted, 2005; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2476.

¹⁰ *Primary languages in initial teacher training* (070031), Ofsted, 2008; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070031.

¹¹ www.dcsf.gov.uk/languages/DSP_whatson_secondary_ks3.cfm.

¹² <http://europa.eu/languages/en/document/80/20>.

¹³ www.teachernet.gov.uk/docbank/index.cfm?id=9522.

¹⁴ *Languages Review*, Department for Education and Skills, 2007; www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/subjects/languages/languagesreview/.

9. A return to being compulsory at Key Stage 4 was not recommended. Instead the review sought the promotion of a better climate for learning languages across Key Stages 3 and 4, and an expectation that there would be an increase in the number of students learning a language. To this end, performance indicators measuring both attainment and participation in languages will be included in the Key Stage 4 achievement and attainment tables from 2008.
10. Ministers have agreed that languages in Key Stage 2 should be made a statutory part of the primary curriculum when it is next reviewed, and that support for primary teachers is to be maintained with particular attention paid to pupils' progress through to secondary school. This is seen as key to revitalising the secondary curriculum.

Part A: modern foreign languages in secondary schools

Attainment in tests and examinations

11. Over the last three years there has been a slow but marked improvement in the proportion of students achieving National Curriculum Level 5 at the end of Key Stage 3 from 50% in 2004 to provisionally 58% in 2007. This supports a view that the framework for languages and the National Languages Strategy are beginning to have an impact. The percentage of students achieving Level 6 and above has also risen from 22% to 25%. Although these figures seem positive, they are substantially below those of other foundation subjects and there is some evidence that teacher assessment is unreliable. A relatively large proportion of students only attain Level 3 or below in languages. While most students at Key Stage 3 have not had the benefit of seven years of learning as they may have had in other foundation subjects, this disparity is still too great. It is relatively straightforward, with the right opportunities for learning, to enable the large majority of students to be working at Level 4 by the end of Year 7.
12. At GCSE level, at the beginning of the period covered by this report, there was an increase in A and B grades awarded in French, German and Spanish; however, French still compared unfavourably with the other two.¹⁵ This may be due to German and Spanish being taken as second languages by more able students. It may also be due to the fall in GCSE entries which had already begun: since 2001 there has been a 30% decrease in total language entries. Girls still outperformed boys: the gap in performance had decreased slightly but, at 15 percentage points, remained too wide.

¹⁵ Percentage of pupils entered achieving A*-C grades at GCSE in 2004: French 47%; German 56%; Spanish 52%.

13. Since 2004 there has been a steady increase each year in the percentage of GCSE A*–C grades awarded in all languages in schools. The overall figure was 66% GCSE A*–C in 2007; the gap between boys and girls has narrowed to approximately 10 percentage points for the main languages studied, but this is still larger than the approximately seven percentage points overall gap for all subjects. However, fewer boys than girls study languages. The results in languages are higher than the averages for all subjects together, but the decline in entries, which continued in the academic year 2006/07, makes it difficult to make an overall judgement other than that students who do take a language currently achieve reasonably well.
14. By 2004 GCE A-level results had improved to the point that just over half of the candidates gained A or B grades in French, German and Spanish. This trend has continued: in 2007 approximately two thirds of candidates gained A or B. Girls continue to outnumber boys at A level, most particularly in French, but boys who take a language tend to do very well. Entries in German and Spanish have also increased in 2007. Overall, entries have stabilised, but post-16 take-up of languages is still very low in schools, and also in colleges where provision is also much reduced.¹⁶ In 2007, GCE A level entries, depending on language, varied from 1.8% to 0.8% of all A-level entries.

Students' achievement

15. In 2005/07 students achieved satisfactorily in almost all of the 60 secondary schools surveyed, although there was variation in performance depending upon the different skills; their achievement was good in just under a third. Some underachievement was observed in individual lessons, mainly in Year 8, reflecting the highest incidence of unsatisfactory teaching. Students in Years 12 and 13 achieved well in lessons: there were very few lessons where their progress was judged to be less than good.
16. The following is an example of a school where the overall effectiveness was judged to be outstanding.

In most lessons observed, students made very good progress. They were willing speakers and were developing good pronunciation and intonation because the teaching ensured that there was enough practice. They were able to write complex sentences from very early on in their language learning. Examples of their extended and creative writing showed that students of all ages had the confidence to have a go. Although their writing was not always as accurate as it could be, it communicated well enough.

¹⁶ *Language Trends 2006 – Vocationally related language learning in further education;* www.cilt.org.uk/research/languagetrends/2006/fe.htm.

17. Students generally made good progress in listening and understanding. However, the 2005/06 survey found that students did not speak enough with sufficient confidence or accuracy. This showed little change from the former Ofsted's reporting nearly 10 years previously: 'When required to speak at greater length or in new situations, [students'] accuracy and fluency deteriorate, partly because their grasp of structure is usually less secure than their retention of vocabulary.'¹⁷
18. Speaking skills were a particular focus for the 2006/07 survey. Progress in speaking was found to be at best adequate in two thirds of the schools in the sample and unsatisfactory in three; it was good in under a third.
19. In a fifth of the schools, students were prepared well for their GCSE speaking tests. Higher-attaining students were helped to manipulate the language so that they could respond creatively to questions. Lower-attaining students learned phrases by heart to respond to questions in familiar contexts. These schools used role play well to ensure that students had good practice. However, it was much rarer for reading or listening to be used to stimulate discussion and communicative activities.
20. In the weaker lessons, students' pronunciation and intonation were rarely better than satisfactory and often hindered communication. Students' accents were anglicised and both these and pronunciation frequently went unchecked. This meant that there was insufficient help for students to master the sounds, rhythms and spellings of a language. Many students lacked confidence, expression and fluency, especially outside the controlled conditions of an exercise set in class. There was too much reliance on written support. For example, students were asked to prepare a dialogue that they then read out so they were doing little more than reading aloud, albeit in pairs or groups. A further hindrance to speaking fluently was that sound-spelling links not been taught well.
21. Overall, there was insufficient emphasis on helping students to use the language spontaneously for real situations. Consequently, too few students could speak creatively, or beyond the topic they were studying, by making up their own sentences in an unrehearsed situation. Several students said that being able to say what they wanted to say would improve their enjoyment.
22. The following lesson encapsulates how Year 8 students who had been learning German for six months made very good progress in talking in German about where they and others lived.

¹⁷ *Secondary education: a review of secondary schools in England 1993-97* (ISBN 0113500998), TSO, 1998; www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/ofsted/seced/chap-7i.htm.

After a fast paced starter activity that captures students' interest and introduces the lesson, students work orally on an exercise which helps them to think about structures and grammar. They practise questions like 'Where do you live?' and 'Where does she live?' Students demonstrate that they can already switch from the first to the third person and they respond well. They then learn new vocabulary such as 'in a house', 'in a flat', 'in a bungalow' and some add adjectives to enrich the description. Good pronunciation is insisted upon and interesting resources from the internet are used on the electronic whiteboard to stimulate answers.

There is a good build-up of more complex sentences so that students can say: 'I live in large house near the sea'; 'He lives on a farm in the country'; 'She lives in a small flat in a big town'.

Pair work follows, after the teacher has demonstrated this with a student, and students ask each other questions about where they live that they answer according to picture cues. Although they have written down the different components of the answers, very few look at them when seeking and giving information because they have had enough practice to have assimilated them and because the teacher actively encourages students to work without written support. They note what their partners have told them in order to be able to feed back in the third person. At this point, and although it is not the end of the lesson, the teacher stops the class and they all sum up what they have learned so far.

The teacher is constantly vigilant about errors of pronunciation and grammar, without being intimidating. She conducts the lesson entirely in German, to which the students respond willingly, demonstrating that this is their normal way of working. In a brief time, just over half an hour, students have made very good progress in learning new phrases, putting them together with phrases and adjectives already learned, and entering into a dialogue with each other. They are beginning to learn to manipulate the language.

23. Good progress in writing was marked by rapid movement from word to sentence to text level work, and by students' ability to manipulate verbs in different tenses. High attaining students in the schools surveyed developed a sound understanding of grammatical structures and expressions that was reflected in some good writing. One inspector wrote after a visit:

Year 10 students' work on 'Hôtel Moche' was creative and succeeded in being very funny. For example:

- nous n'avons pas de restaurant mais près de l'hôtel il y a un Little Chef
- la chambre est hantée; la douche est en panne
- il y avait déjà quelqu'un dans mon lit!

The advertisements and descriptions were all presented in different ways, some using ICT. In the same classroom, extended writing of all kinds from all year groups in different formats showed how well creativity was encouraged and that students were inspired to write at length.

Another inspector found:

In writing, high attaining students show good understanding of the patterns of the language and apply them successfully. As they progress through the school they extend the range of vocabulary and structures that they are able to manipulate so that they are able to say what they want to. However, middle and lower attaining students at Key Stage 4 tend to limit themselves to using the first person and to depend too much on written notes and set phrases.

24. Writing in the weaker departments surveyed, especially at Key Stage 3, was too brief with students doing too little independent writing and demonstrating a weak grasp of verbs; it was not unusual for students to only write sentences and not to progress to writing more extended text in paragraphs.
25. Few lessons seen in the survey included extensive reading; reading as a stimulus for speaking and writing was limited. The following is a rare example of excellent departmental practice.

Students are very well prepared for reading in examinations. A variety of texts is used from Year 7 onwards, including texts of different lengths from a range of authentic sources, such as websites, and opportunities for reading are written into schemes of work. Students are confident when reading aloud and their pronunciation does not hinder communication. Students are able to re-use language they have read in speaking and writing tasks.

In a Year 10 lesson a poster was used effectively to develop students' speaking, listening and writing skills and as a stimulus to practise recently learned structures in French. Students are able to use their knowledge of English or other languages to work out meaning. Teachers plan their work carefully and make good use of familiar words to increase confidence in reading tasks; students are encouraged to explain their own strategies – such as familiar words and links with other words – in remembering or working out the meaning of new vocabulary. Reading is used to develop intercultural understanding; for example, in lessons seen, students explored the differences and similarities between places in a town and different kinds of holiday accommodation. Labelling is used very effectively when a new language is introduced so that students are rapidly able to use the new language themselves. In a Year 9 lesson students were able to skim and scan texts effectively to find detail and were able to explain the techniques they had used. Students use dictionaries and

reference material actively and proficiently to understand text. Homework is used well to reinforce and extend the reading techniques practised in lessons.

26. Most of the students spoken to said that they rarely read beyond the course book, a worksheet or for examination practice; glossaries in course books were used more frequently than dictionaries. This suggests that there is insufficient intensive reading. Sometimes the internet was used to good effect for research, as in this example from a Year 8 lesson.

Students showed how they could get information from a website when peers provided prompts: this is an ingenious way to develop reading skills alongside comparing a French school and its history with that of their own.

27. Easy readers, poetry, comics, magazines, newspapers and other reading materials were rarely used for teaching and learning: few school libraries in the sample had these or up-to-date foreign language books. Overall, the dearth of evidence of students reading extended texts generated this as a key focus for inspection in the 2007/08 subject survey.
28. Generally, the potential of homework for students to practise reading for pleasure and writing at length was not realised.
29. There have been benefits in using the Secondary National Strategy, Key Stage 3 and the framework for teaching modern foreign languages to support students' achievement, as in this example.

Students made good progress in the lessons observed in all languages and in the written work sampled. It was particularly notable how students were willing to respond in the language, make efforts to understand teachers' instructions and write at length. The use of features of the secondary strategy and the framework for languages supported students very well in acquiring the skills to manipulate the language and assessing how well they were doing. These features were applied consistently across all lessons.

30. Our 2004/05 Annual Report identified progression in French as a particular issue.¹⁸ This was investigated in the 2005/06 survey. Although most of the students surveyed were enthusiastic about French at the start of Year 7, this was often not sustained in Years 8 and 9 and, overall, their progress was satisfactory rather than good. By the end of Key Stage 3 most students could usually understand a range of tenses and engaged in basic conversations with peers or their teachers, but their pronunciation was often not accurate and they

¹⁸ *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools 2004/05* (ISBN 0102935459), Ofsted, 2005; <http://live.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/annualreport0405/4.2.10.html>.

were hesitant when speaking. Writing was often restricted to basic phrases with little evidence of extended pieces of work. Progress in listening and reading was good. Some able students underachieved because activities were not planned to match abilities and mixed ability groupings.

31. The large majority of students who chose to continue French at Key Stage 4 followed a full GCSE course. They consolidated their understanding of basic vocabulary from Key Stage 3, but gaps in their grammatical knowledge impeded high achievement: students had often had too few opportunities to grasp and practise grammatical concepts and apply them in new contexts or found it difficult to do so. A few schools surveyed felt that progress was good enough to enter groups early for the French GCSE examination at the end of Year 9. However, this sometimes led to lower grades than might have been achieved had they waited until Key Stage 4, as well as a lack of enthusiasm to continue: the opposite of what the school intended.
32. Year 7 students of all abilities usually took French and it is the only language offered by many schools in Key Stage 4. More able students tended to take other languages as a second language in Key Stage 3.
33. In summary, the weaknesses in French were not unique and needed to be tackled across a range of language teaching.

Students' attitudes and personal development

34. Even though fewer students were choosing modern languages in Key Stage 4, the survey found that most students seemed to enjoy their lessons and behaved well. They worked well in lessons and had a good understanding of the value of learning a language, such as its potential contribution towards their economic well-being. This was evident in two thirds of the schools visited in 2005/07. Students said that they appreciated the time given by their teachers to help them get on, both in lessons and beyond, and the extra-curricular opportunities associated with it. Those who had been abroad spoke excitedly about how it all became real when they had to use the languages they had learned. Many still think that 'it is a difficult subject'.

What students say about language learning

The ups

- Each lesson is different.
- It's sociable and fun.
- Quite active compared to other subjects.
- You have to work hard and it's challenging.
- We like to speak it because it sounds cool.
- It's cultural.
- It broadens horizons.

- It provides an opportunity to see your own language in a different light.

The downs

- It's sometimes not explained well enough.
 - I would like to work in groups more often.
 - I don't know why we do PowerPoint presentations.
 - We don't like copying out to memorise.
 - We occasionally use ICT but never in French.
 - The pace is slow because it is mixed ability. It was faster last year when we were set.
 - I can think of no other context other than a French lesson where I tell anyone the colour of my bedroom wallpaper or which day my Dad puts the bins out!
35. Occasionally, poor attitudes and behaviour were evident, even when teaching was satisfactory or better. These occasions were often associated with students' lack of understanding of the benefits of learning a language or their lack of interest because lessons were too predictable or lacking challenge.

Teaching and learning

36. A third of the schools surveyed from 2005/07 showed considerable strengths in languages teaching. Teachers had a strong command and knowledge of the language they were teaching and used it consistently in the lesson. Good routines and the teaching of sound-spelling links helped students to develop confidence and good pronunciation. In one report an inspector wrote: 'In most lessons teachers use their knowledge well to make clear presentations of new language so that students rapidly understand, identify and apply patterns, and use new language successfully themselves.'
37. However, the majority of teaching observed was satisfactory rather than good: this is a smaller proportion than in most other subjects. Teaching was better in Key Stage 4 and post-16 than in Key Stage 3. This reflected a clearer focus on achieving objectives, albeit to cover the examination syllabus on a tight schedule. Too close an adherence to the course book was often a feature of mundane and unexciting teaching.
38. When judging the overall quality of teaching, inspectors take into account evidence from lessons observed. They also use other evidence like:
- quality of marking
 - use of assessment to inform teaching and learning particularly for different groups of learners
 - use of ICT
 - encouragement for independent reading, writing or research
 - opportunities for students to speak beyond their topics and spontaneously some or all of which might be weaker than the teaching in the lessons seen.

39. Overall strengths in teaching included:

- good working relationships
- generally high expectations of students' behaviour and the pace of working
- thorough planning resulting in well structured and organised lessons with clear and suitable learning objectives
- a variety of activities to accomplish the learning objectives, including active work such as working in pairs
- good questioning, for example to ensure that students have understood instructions in the target language
- teachers' generally good knowledge of how to help students secure good grades at GCSE
- good use of the electronic whiteboard to present new material and capture students' interest.

40. Weaker features of teaching included:

- too little use of the language by the teacher or inconsistent use, particularly translating each phrase used into English because of insecurity about students' understanding
- too much talk from teachers, such as lengthy explanations that decreased opportunities for students to speak and diverted their attention
- over-reliance on course books and too much emphasis on memorising individual words and phrases at the expense of teaching language skills and helping students to learn how to learn a language
- aiming at the middle in mixed ability lessons so that the needs of the less and most able were not met
- too much minimal marking using ticks and unfounded praise, particularly in Key Stage 3 where feedback was often poor and inconsistent across departments.

41. Poor feedback was a serious concern. Even where feedback was good in some respects it could fall down in others, as in this example.

Students are given very good feedback on their performance in writing. They are very aware of how they can improve their work and they know precisely how they are doing and what grade they can expect.

However, they are given less precise feedback on speaking. This feedback does not often focus on how they could improve their pronunciation and does not encourage them to work from memory quickly enough, which means that there are times when the most able students are not challenged enough.

In one school the inspector found:

While marking is regular and up to date with praise and encouragement given, too many inaccurate spellings are missed throughout the four years and insufficient mini-targets are set.

Even in the schools where inspectors saw the best marking, the use of short-term targets was inconsistent.

42. During 2005/06 the survey of the Secondary National Strategy included visits to 10 schools where languages were inspected with a particular focus on the impact of the Strategy on languages. It found examples of its good impact on teaching and learning when significant features of the strategy were built into lessons to help students acquire skills to manipulate the language and assess how well they were doing. These included:
- lively starter activities that were effectively linked to previous learning and the lesson to follow
 - purposeful plenary work, which was sometimes quite long and using assessment for learning techniques
 - learning objectives shared with students and referred to within the lesson and at the end
 - classroom routines that supported the students' use of the new language
 - the use of assessment for learning
 - auditing to review and amend the schemes of work
 - the framework used to develop the department's thinking about planning and teaching lessons and about incorporating grammar, structure and form.
43. Where the impact was not so good, use of the strategy was inconsistent across departments and not monitored. Features were planned into lessons but not implemented particularly well.
44. Overall, schools surveyed during 2005/07 had taken the strategy's lead on assessment for learning as a whole-school initiative that had benefited modern languages. This was particularly the case where language departments had been active in taking this forward, as in this example.

Younger students have an assessment booklet in which they regularly tick off their accomplishments and set themselves targets, or teachers help them to do so. In lessons, students are regularly required to check each other's work, discuss it and spot errors before they look at the correct copy. Students were required in one lesson to identify what would make different pieces of work better so that they could achieve better grades. Examples of day-to-day marking were good with clear guidance for improvement. All students spoken to said that comments, end of unit tests and targets were helpful.

In another school objectives were used very effectively to assess how well students had achieved.

Features of the strategy have been incorporated into teaching and learning... Lesson starters are good. Lessons are well planned to meet objectives. In the Key Stage 3 lessons observed, objectives were particularly well discussed with students, leading to class and individual target setting for the lesson. This target-setting then formed the basis of a plenary at the end of the lesson. This was very well done in the Year 8 lesson where students worked in pairs to check what each other had learned and were vigilant in ensuring that no one cheated!

45. Some aspects of assessment for learning remained to be developed in the schools surveyed. Many students knew what National Curriculum level they were working at but not what that meant or how to take the next step. While almost all teachers regularly assessed listening, reading and writing in Key Stage 3, the assessment of speaking was often ignored.
46. In just under a quarter of the schools surveyed in 2006/07, independent learning was enhanced by ICT and the use of revision websites for examination purposes had increased. However, regular access for lessons was still a problem and some teachers still lacked confidence to include ICT in their teaching. Using it for drafting and redrafting text to improve accuracy and style and for different purposes was limited. This example shows the potential of ICT to improve achievement and enhance motivation.

In a Year 9 Spanish lesson, lower-attaining boys were keen to participate in oral work and made good progress in developing speaking and listening skills as a result of the skilful use of the digital language laboratory. They responded enthusiastically to pitting their accuracy and speed of response against that of the pictures gradually taking shape on the screen. The element of competition was the main factor in engaging their interest. They clearly enjoyed the activities and the sense of their achievement was tangible during the lesson.

47. Opportunities were often missed to develop cultural awareness through the nuances of the language being taught, as well as through discussing the cultural similarities and differences by using authentic materials for listening and reading and to stimulate speaking. Students often reached the end of Key Stage 3, or even Key Stage 4, with no clear idea of what happens to letter sounds when accented characters are used or, for example, what an î or an ô in French denotes. Teaching rarely used students' home or heritage languages and cultures to develop students' knowledge about languages or to develop students' awareness of languages spoken in the community; for example, teachers rarely made comparisons between home and heritage languages and the National Curriculum languages being learned so that those who spoke another language already could build on this and those who did not could gain greater awareness of languages generally.

The modern languages curriculum

48. The curriculum was good in a third of the schools in the 2005/07 survey sample and satisfactory in the remainder. Full school inspections also reported favourably on the modern languages curriculum. Almost all students in the survey studied one language in Key Stage 3 and many had the opportunity to study two or sometimes three. These were more usually French, German and Spanish. Other languages, for example, Italian, Mandarin or Urdu, were also offered in a number of schools as second or third languages. The second or third languages were usually European.¹⁹ The variety in languages offered may well alter, however, from September 2008. Along with the revised National Curriculum, students, while still being required to study a language at Key Stage 3, will no longer be required to study a European language.
49. The time allocation for language learning was usually adequate. At Key Stage 3 it was sometimes insufficient when a second language was introduced and the time was shared between the two. The better schools sometimes supplemented this with extra-curricular time. Where schools were providing a wider range of languages in Key Stage 3, and where students studied two languages in less time than would normally be the case for each language in Key Stage 3, uptake in Key Stage 4, as well as attitudes and performance, needed to be monitored carefully to ensure that provision resulted in the intended outcomes.
50. Schools offered a second language mostly to higher attaining students in Key Stage 3.
51. In Key Stage 4, almost all of the schools surveyed ensured that students could choose to study a language. Although schools were becoming more creative in setting up pathways for post-14 students, their option systems could still prevent a student continuing with a language. For example, the survey sometimes found that students who wished to follow a vocational pathway were prevented from studying a language. Where this happened, a student's entitlement to study a language in Key Stage 4 was not met. The better schools surveyed were providing the opportunity for students to study their home or community language and take a GCSE in it or, at the very least, they supported them to do so. Few schools in the survey, however, had looked beyond the GCSE examination to accredit their students' achievements.
52. Four schools in the 2006/07 survey provided an opportunity for their higher achieving students to take the GCSE examination early, for example in Year 9 or 10. This enabled them to take a short course in another language or to start an AS level. In one school, this enabled students to learn a second language in two years. In terms of post-16 take-up and performance, schools have yet to

¹⁹ See also *Every language matters: an evaluation of the extent and impact of initial training to teach a wider range of world languages (070030)*, Ofsted, 2008; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070030.

evaluate thoroughly the long-term impact of taking a language examination early.

53. Almost all the schools grouped students by ability, but often did not take into account the range of ability within a class when planning lessons; consequently, there was much 'teaching to the middle'. This was exacerbated in schools where low numbers studying languages at Key Stage 4 resulted in classes of very mixed ability.
54. An outstanding feature in one school was the deployment of a specialist higher-level teaching assistant to teach languages to a group of vulnerable Year 7 students before they joined the mainstream languages class.
55. Although schemes of work were occasionally very good, particularly when they were devised using the objectives from the languages framework or the GCSE syllabus, many were copied from commercial publications. They were not tailored to the individual school's circumstances and therefore were not as useful for planning. Features that were often missing were:
 - sound-spelling links
 - speaking beyond the topic
 - the use of reading to stimulate other skills
 - creative writing
 - the use of ICT in different ways to raise achievement
 - the use of authentic materials
 - assessment.

These were then lacking in lessons and homework. Ultimately, the National Curriculum programme of study was not covered. Few departments ensured that all students received their entitlement to use ICT to enhance their learning and help them to make better progress, for example by drafting and redrafting text for accuracy, or for researching and reading authentic material.

56. Extra-curricular provision was at least good in nearly all the schools visited and generally popular. This included visits and/or exchanges for students in Key Stages 3 and 4 and, post-16, study visits, work placements or both. Although a decrease in visits has been suggested, the evidence from the survey indicates that they are reappearing. Sometimes they are linked to another subject area, such as art or history; sometimes they are a means to encourage students to continue to study a language. All such visits contributed to students' awareness of the international dimension and students generally spoke about them very favourably.
57. The better departments ran revision classes; sometimes they held sessions at lunchtime or before/after school in a new language. Languages noted between 2005 and 2007 included Arabic, Chinese, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Persian,

Russian and Urdu. A lunchtime Italian lesson included students, staff and local adult learners.

58. Secondary schools were beginning to establish links for languages with partner primary schools. Very few, however, had adjusted their Key Stage 3 schemes of work and their organisation of the languages curriculum in the light of what they learned. This becomes imperative as more and more students join secondary school having studied a language for four years at Key Stage 2. Some Year 7 students in schools in the survey had studied languages for several years, yet this was completely ignored.
59. Schools that had links with local businesses found these beneficial as they enabled students to assimilate the advantages of language learning in real contexts.
60. Many schools had very small numbers studying languages in the sixth form. These schools either entered into consortium arrangements to maintain provision, or ensured that their students could attend another local school or college. This generally worked satisfactorily.

Leadership and management

61. In almost all the schools surveyed in 2005/07, senior leaders were supportive and committed to improving provision. This showed itself in many ways, such as the commitment to offer all students a language, decisions about staffing, the deployment of specialist support to enable small group provision and support for improvement through regular monitoring and evaluation. Senior managers generally helped subject leaders with their management role and, generally, time for professional development was generous. Strong senior and subject leadership and management created an ethos in which language learning was valued and a culture that drove forward improvements in teaching and learning. The following example encapsulates this well.

The leadership and management of languages in this school are good. The headteacher and senior leaders strongly support languages. Line management supports and challenges the department effectively and, since the previous inspection, the subject leader has improved many aspects of the department's work, such as new technology and a more effective allocation of time for Year 10 examinations. The school's commitment to inclusion sets a very positive climate for language learning. The review of teaching and learning responsibilities resulting from workforce reform has been used sensitively to offer professional development through sharing departmental roles and responsibilities. A collaborative ethos supports discussion and improvements. The department has been quick to develop expert self-evaluation that has been disseminated across the school. Teaching is monitored carefully through formal and informal observations, so that the subject leader is

well aware of strengths and weaknesses and takes steps to secure improvement.

62. The day-to-day management of language departments was good in nearly half of the schools in the survey. Subject leadership was satisfactory and this was improving as schools required departmental self-evaluation to feed into the school's self-evaluation.
63. Departmental self-evaluation was improving but it was not always sufficiently sharp, detailed or followed up well enough, as in this example.

The department has completed its own self-evaluation and judges itself to be satisfactory in all aspects. This inspection confirms this but the department needs to be sharper in discerning strengths and areas for improvement and focusing on these. For example, it identified extended writing as an area for improvement and this is developing well in Key Stage 4, but there is no strong focus in Key Stage 3 where it needs to begin.

64. In half of the schools departmental self-evaluation was linked well to improvement planning, as in this example.

Monitoring and evaluation are outstanding. The head of faculty uses an extensive range of data to assess the department's effectiveness, including surveys of students' views. Data analysis is very good at Key Stage 4 in particular, where key trends and areas for development are accurately identified. Rigorous lesson observations are frank and perceptive about strengths in teaching and what needs to be improved. Departmental self-evaluation is of high quality and development planning provides a very firm basis to move forward. Clear plans exist for tackling areas that have been identified, such as improving progress in Key Stage 3, raising boys' performance and improving students' speaking skills.

The departmental development plan and self-evaluation are good. The subject leader has a clear grasp of strengths and areas for improvement. The department is now more focused on improvement and intervention. Standards and achievement have improved and the key priorities for improvement are in place.

65. Occasionally, there was still no formal self-evaluation or it languished at the level of analysing Key Stage 4 examination results. In the weakest example, the data used to set targets and monitor performance were incomplete and unreliable and issues from the previous whole-school inspection report had not been tackled.
66. Using data to set short- and long-term targets and monitor students' progress was weak in too many of the language departments in the survey, particularly

in Key Stage 3 where the schools did not generally work towards external accreditation. However, this is a key issue in improving students' achievement in languages and, ultimately, their enjoyment and desire to continue to learn one. Inspectors found discrepancies between teacher assessment in Key Stage 3 and students' actual performance, as well as schools that did not participate in any processes of moderation and standardisation of judgements. Schools that had only rudimentary systems to track students' performance could not always be specific enough to inform students about how they needed to improve in each skill area.

67. In about a third of the schools surveyed, there were unacceptable inconsistencies within departments about implementing key policies such as marking, using the language for teaching, how to teach grammar and the use of ICT. This meant that students in the same school had different experiences of learning a language: some made good progress and others did not.

Initial teacher training for teachers of secondary languages

68. During the period of this report, there were short and full inspections of languages in initial teacher education and accreditation inspections of designated recommending bodies.²⁰
69. The quality of the great majority of the courses was at least good and was continuing to improve. The providers had updated course content successfully to meet changes in national requirements and current developments. They gave appropriate emphasis to initiatives such as the secondary strategy and the framework of objectives for teaching languages. More recently, they had begun to cover developments such as languages in primary schools and the Every Child Matters agenda. Preparing trainees to teach students for whom English is an additional language had also improved as tutors adopted creative solutions to the challenge to provide trainees with practical experience of this. Training materials, such as course handbooks, were excellent. Trainees judged the centrally based training in languages very highly.
70. Subject tutors were often very experienced and induction arrangements for new staff were good. Tutors kept up to date through networking and involvement in curriculum development. Support for school-based mentors was good. They were often given useful lists of topics to cover in school-based training and subject-specific guidance on how to use the standards for the award of qualified teacher status when assessing trainees. In many courses it

²⁰ Designated recommending bodies are now known as employment-based ITT (EBITT) providers. In England, EBITT providers are partnerships of bodies such as schools, local authorities and accredited providers of initial teacher training. They are given the powers to design and provide individual programmes of teacher training to those wishing to become a qualified teacher through the Graduate Teacher Programme, Registered Teacher Programme and the Overseas Trained Teacher Programme.

was routine for the subject tutor to observe a trainee's teaching jointly with the trainee's mentor.

71. School placements provided trainees with sufficient experience of the full ability and age ranges. Tutors had few problems providing enough experience of working in Key Stage 4, despite the reduction in the number of classes in many of their partnership schools. The challenge of providing post-16 experience had been largely overcome. Many providers had re-designated their courses as 11–16 courses but they continued to offer some experience for post-16 teaching.
72. Courses met individual training needs well. Tutors selected schools carefully to ensure that trainees practised their specialist language and provided a high level of support for them. Tutors and mentors set challenging targets and monitored trainees' progress regularly. Differentiated training in ICT and language enhancement in some courses gave trainees the opportunity to develop these competences at an appropriate level. The support offered to foreign nationals with their use of academic English and their understanding of the education system has improved.
73. The quality of the training had a clear impact on the quality of teaching in schools. The last available national data is from 2004/05 and shows that 65% of lessons taught by newly qualified teachers were judged to be good; this is similar to the proportion of good or better lessons taught by experienced languages teachers. Only 5% of lessons by newly qualified teachers were judged to be inadequate.
74. Nonetheless, some concerns remain.
 - Most courses recruited fewer trainees than the numbers allocated to them. This occurred in large and small providers, and in higher education institutions and consortia providing school-based training.
 - There was too much variability in the quality of mentors' work and this was despite the support they received. Some observations of lessons were not sufficiently subject-specific. Targets that mentors set for trainees were often too general. Mentors were seldom involved in monitoring and improving trainees' subject knowledge.
 - Providers conducted thorough audits of trainees' subject knowledge at a very early stage, but some made little use of the findings during the course.
 - Tutors drew on a range of evidence to evaluate their courses, but their final written evaluations tended to be too descriptive and did not confront weaknesses. They rarely considered outcomes, such as the effect of the course on the quality of trainees' teaching.
 - Employment-based routes did not equip languages trainees as well as more established courses. Trainees received a good general training, but these

routes provided too little to improve their subject knowledge. The trainees were not made sufficiently aware of current developments in the subject and were not taught some essential skills, such as how to maintain the foreign language during lessons.

Extending potential trainee teachers' language competence

75. The TDA has funded some university language departments to provide short 'extension' courses in French and German for potential trainees in secondary languages.²¹ The aim is to boost the number of teachers available to teach two or more languages to at least Key Stage 3.
76. Trainees will normally be proficient in at least one language and, before they can be accepted on to the course, will already have a place on a secondary ITT programme. They may have a beginners' level of French or German, but if required there is two to three weeks of pre-course work before the course itself.
77. The courses are generally available from April/May to August; they provide intensive language tuition and include a two-week placement abroad where trainees continue to learn the language and knowledge about the culture of the country. Trainees who enrol on these courses receive a bursary to support them during their studies.
78. In 2007 Ofsted monitored four of these courses: two in German and two in French. Common strengths included the following:
 - the balance between taught sessions and more independent work was good, with good access to tutors for the latter
 - trainees valued the courses highly and responded very well to the high expectations of course managers and tutors
 - the use of the target language was at a very high level during the sessions; this and the very supportive climate for learning helped the trainees to make rapid progress, encouraged them to take risks and manipulate the language
 - trainees evaluated the courses continually and the information was used well to improve the courses.
79. Common weaknesses included the following:
 - the quality of feedback given to students during individual tutorial sessions varied

²¹ University language departments have to submit tenders against detailed criteria. They receive funding to provide the training.

- the very mixed-ability and mixed-experience nature of the groups was not always recognised and catered for as well as it might have been
 - the potential of the universities' virtual learning environments was not well exploited.
80. The inspection also identified some particular weaknesses. Trainees on one course had no overview of the course content, no concept of the language needed to teach the subject and little idea about what they would be doing on the study visit.
81. Not all teaching sessions demonstrated the best practice in language teaching: they sometimes adhered too closely to the course book with too much focus on grammatical exercises. Not all courses provided enough structure for the supported self-study sessions. While resources and access to them were mostly good, there was some variation and some needed updating.
82. Approaches to assessment and self-assessment varied significantly. The best examples involved guided self-assessment from the beginning, based on the European Languages Portfolio and followed up by weekly assessments where students recorded a level within the portfolio. One course used formal validation procedures leading to 20 credits at level 2. Weaknesses included the failure to follow up baseline assessment and to record students' achievements. In one provider, there was uncertainty about the arrangements for in-course and final assessments.

Providing teachers of a wider range of languages

83. During 2006/07, Ofsted conducted a survey into the provision of initial teacher education for teachers of community languages.²² Inspection had already shown consistently high results at GCSE level in community languages and yet a wide variety in the quality of teaching. The aim was to evaluate the provision and impact of PGCE courses for intending teachers of languages, excluding French, German, Irish, Spanish and Welsh. The survey was extended to examine the reasons behind the lack of provision and uptake of PGCE courses and alternative training routes.
84. At the time it was conducted the survey noted that very few PGCE courses for teaching community languages were available. Only eight initial teacher education providers offered PGCE courses in community languages and take-up was very low. Three providers had no trainees on their courses in 2006/07. In 2006/07 only 35 trainees nationally were undertaking training on five PGCE courses in eight languages. No courses existed for training to teach Gujarati,

²² *Every language matters: an evaluation of the extent and impact of initial teacher training to teach a wider range of world languages* (070030), Ofsted, 2008; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070030.

although 1,025 students studied it at GCSE level in 2006. In parts of England where community languages were widely taught in schools, no such courses were available.

85. Prospective trainees faced significant barriers. Little or no choice over the location of training reduced the number of applicants. They were also deterred by a requirement that they should be able to teach a European language to at least Key Stage 3. Although extension courses in French and German were available, few community language teachers interviewed during the survey had followed these. Flexible courses that offered training in a trainee's chosen language were more successful than full-time PGCE courses in attracting applicants. The Graduate Teacher Programme offered a successful alternative employment-based training route. However, over a quarter of the teachers surveyed who had trained this way had done so in a subject other than the language they were teaching.²³
86. Lord Dearing's languages review, described in paragraph 8, referred to the need to respond to the growing economies of India and China. However, our survey revealed that although a field of potential trainees appeared to exist, not all of them could take up initial training until more placements were found in schools. All the initial teacher education providers inspected found this difficult. One provider had to turn down applicants who met all the criteria for admission to the course because of a lack of a suitable placement. Schools might not provide additional courses in community languages if they cannot be confident of recruiting staff to teach them.
87. Senior staff in the schools surveyed were positive about the impact of PGCE training on the quality of the teaching of their community languages teachers. However, not all the languages teachers interviewed for the survey were convinced of the importance of training, especially if they spoke the language as their first language.
88. In order to stem the decline in the teaching of community languages and to promote them up to and beyond GCSE level, the languages review made a number of recommendations; in particular, it said that all community language teachers should be given the opportunity to achieve qualified teacher status by the most appropriate route. It recommended extending the range of available PGCE courses to include a wider range of languages than French, German and Spanish and that these languages should be given equal status. It also recommended that providers should review their admissions criteria and course structures to ensure that unintentional barriers did not deter potential applicants.

²³ *Every language matters* has further details of the reason for this.

Part B: a changing landscape

Starting early: languages in Key Stage 2

Initiatives to promote primary languages

89. The National Languages Strategy sets out an entitlement for all Key Stage 2 pupils to have the opportunity to learn a language in class time by 2010. In 2003, the government funded 19 pathfinders – partnerships between LAs, schools and key partners – to develop ways of teaching languages in primary schools. We inspected 10 in 2004/05 and from 2005 to 2007 included a sample of 60 primary schools in our survey of modern languages.
90. The pathfinder initiative showed what was possible and some of the pitfalls. Pupils' achievement was at least satisfactory and often very good or excellent. They had very positive attitudes. They were confident in speaking what they had learned and their listening skills were very good. Many showed a good cultural understanding. Relative areas of weakness were reading, writing and understanding how languages worked.
91. These strengths and weaknesses reflected the teaching. Teachers' linguistic competence was at least adequate. However, while individual lessons were usually well planned, few schools had schemes of work or arrangements for assessment. Few of the schools in the survey celebrated the diversity of their pupils' home or heritage languages: those that did so did it well.
92. The quality of the provision was strongly associated with leadership at school and pathfinder level. The better schools had identified a suitable curriculum model, as well as staff to take it forward, through a process of audit, planning and review. The pathfinders provided good training that covered language skills and methodology. Monitoring and communication with the secondary schools were particular weaknesses. Overall, the pathfinders initiative was helpful in prompting consideration of what needed to be done to develop primary modern languages more widely.
93. Evidence from the DCSF showed that in 2006/07 70% of schools provided languages in curriculum time to one or more year groups in Key Stage 2.²⁴ This is supported by our survey evidence. While this indicates significant growth, our survey showed 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.

²⁴ *Language learning provision at Key Stage 2 findings from the 2006 survey of primary schools in England*, (Brief No: RBX02-07), DfES, June 2007; www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/programmeofresearch/projectinformation.cfm?projectid=15236&resultspage=1.

94. Since the pathfinder initiative, the Government has provided funding to LAs for primary modern languages. They are required to use it to support their schools. The LA can retain up to one third of the funding to build up support and coordination: the rest should be devolved to schools to build staffing and other capacity. A key recommendation of the 2007 languages review was that levels of support for primary modern languages should be maintained. LAs have developed different models of support and the large majority now have a consultant for primary languages.
95. Extensive support for schools has been developed over the past two years. There is now a comprehensive Key Stage 2 Framework for Languages. The National Centre for languages (CILT) was commissioned to provide training for trainers in each LA and this has now been completed. Training was offered to staff in specialist language colleges and higher education institutions. More recently, a primary modern languages training zone was launched to support professional development online and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) has produced new schemes of work for French, German and Spanish. Jointly with the British Council, primary teachers can 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.²⁵ Currently, 250 assistants work in primary schools and the number is increasing.
96. Whole-school inspection reports illustrate some of the benefits of introducing primary languages. Around a quarter of the reports from 2005/07 mention languages, including these examples.

Recently introduced Spanish lessons have spurred on pupils' interest in another language and this is having a good effect upon their understanding of letter sounds in Spanish as well as in English.

A pilot scheme to teach Spanish in Years 3 and 4 broadens horizons, builds self-esteem and adds to pupils' enjoyment.

Specialist language teaching in French and Japanese is interesting and challenging. Pupils know this gives them a head start and increases their choices when they move to the next school.

The French language pervades the school.

The school offers a vibrant and exciting curriculum and all pupils have opportunities to learn French, Spanish and German. In Year 6 some lessons in a variety of curriculum areas are taught partly in French,

²⁵ See www.britishcouncil.org.

enabling pupils to apply their vocabulary in new contexts and enhancing both their learning and personal development.

Pupils' enthusiasm for learning is increased considerably through the vast range of exciting activities on offer. From Year 3 all pupils are taught formally to speak Spanish and pupils enjoy communicating with twinned schools in Madrid and Mexico.

97. During the 2005/07 survey, inspectors evaluated how well primary schools were implementing the new entitlement for pupils to learn a language and their progress towards the 2010 requirement.
98. Progress was good in just over half of the 60 schools surveyed, outstanding in 10 schools and inadequate in six. In the schools where progress was good or outstanding, at least two year groups were learning a language. There was very strong commitment from the headteacher and, in particular, there was good planning for sustainability and a well developed partnership with the local secondary schools. Class teachers had received good training and LAs had provided strong support.
99. In the schools whose progress was less than good, some or all of the following were evident:
 - the process was in its early stages and the school had not planned for progression
 - too little time was allocated for teaching the language to achieve good progress, including too little follow-up across the week after a timetabled lesson
 - insufficient attention was given to assessment and too little thought had been given to transferring information to and working with partner secondary schools
 - teaching, learning and pupils' progress were not monitored.

The quality of modern languages in Key Stage 2

100. In 2005/07 the overall effectiveness of language learning was good in just over half of the schools in the survey sample. In these schools a wide range of curriculum models was used: half of them provided a language throughout Key Stage 2, with others starting in Years 4, 5 or 6. The choice of language was generally made according to the availability and willingness of teachers and any training that was available, not necessarily with progression to secondary school in mind. French was the most common language, but Spanish was taught in nearly a third of the schools surveyed. Inspectors also noted the teaching of German or Japanese. Schools allocated an average of 30 minutes a week but, in the better schools, this rose to as much as an hour. Overall, to ensure good progress, 30 minutes was insufficient without good reinforcement at other times and this was often lacking.

101. Given the challenges of providing for a new language in the primary curriculum, many pupils in the survey had had a good experience and this is reflected in their generally very positive attitudes towards learning languages. They showed a good understanding of why learning languages was important and could usually talk enthusiastically about it.

A group of Year 4 pupils in their second year of learning French talked about links to literacy, geography and history, how it would help them get a job, as well as when they went to France on holiday, and how they could help French people in England. They particularly liked 'trying to work out things' rather than being told the meaning of words and phrases. They liked the varied resources they used, active learning with pair work and singing, and watching videos.

102. The next example shows how learning a language can pervade the school where the ethos encourages this.

Pupils in Year 4 are very enthusiastic about learning Spanish. They particularly enjoy singing and, during their discussion with the inspector, they spontaneously burst into song. During a drawing lesson they were also singing along to Spanish songs playing in the background. At the end of the day, when given the opportunity to do private reading, boys in particular were keen to read books in Spanish. They clearly got great pleasure from reading aloud.

103. The pupils in these examples did not see learning a language as a chore or a discrete subject, but as something which was intrinsic to their lives at school and beyond: this is a key area for development in secondary schools.

104. In the better schools pupils had developed good listening skills and a good understanding of basic classroom instructions. Their speaking skills were also developing well but their pronunciation was often adversely affected because pupils were unaware of the links between sounds and spelling. Occasionally, there was too much teaching of individual words rather than moving to sentences and building up dialogues. Reading was less well developed, although some pupils were developing a facility to comprehend well using language learning skills and, for example, familiar words. The following example is from a mixed Year 3 and 4 class of 33 pupils in a small village school. It was only their sixth 30-minute lesson.

The book, called '*L'automne arrive*', has a phrase on each page. The teacher shows each page as she reads out loud and the pupils deduce what it means because there are pictures and lots of familiar words and they have been taught how these words are similar to English. An exciting moment occurs when the teacher moves quickly over '*les feuilles jaunissent*' but one boy shoots his hand up and remarks that '*jaunissent*' is

very like '*jaune*' and so guesses the meaning. There is a good sense of accomplishment in what they have done.

105. Writing at this stage was confined mainly to copying or matching words to pictures or gaps in phrases. The slower development of reading and writing was not unexpected, given that many of the schools surveyed had only just introduced a language into Years 3 and 4. Not all the schools were aware of the need to plan for reading and writing.
106. Pupils who were making good progress were starting to see language patterns and understand concepts such as gender and singular and plural; they also understand cultural elements of the countries where the languages were spoken. Where progress was judged satisfactory overall, pupils' recall was sometimes weak and their understanding of basic grammatical rules and language learning skills was more limited.
107. One of the aspects of teaching and learning in the *Key Stage 2 framework for languages* is intercultural understanding.²⁶ Pupils were very interested in the way others live and, when the cultural aspects of language learning were drawn out well, they readily made comparisons with life in 21st century Britain. They identified with young people in the countries of the languages they were learning and those who spoke languages other than English at home or in their local community. They reflected on similarities with and differences between their own languages and lifestyles.
108. The teaching seen during the survey was by teachers teaching their own classes, specialists teaching across different classes and teachers from outside the school. The latter could be from the local specialist language college or secondary school or bought in through a LA group, as in this example.

An LA area development group, chaired by one school's headteacher, established primary languages. All the other headteachers attended the meetings. In 2004/05 the group bid for and received funding. Peripatetic teachers were appointed to the group and the LA trained them in primary teaching and learning. In 2005/06 all the primary schools worked through the group with peripatetic teachers teaching French in Year 3. In 2006/07 some primary schools continued alone, but most stayed with the group and paid for the peripatetic teachers through their budget as external funding was reduced. Provision was extended to Year 4. The teaching observed during the visit was good. The pupils' verdict was, 'It's wicked!' A disadvantage was that the peripatetic teacher's schedule did not allow enough time for discussion about follow-up and consolidation between lessons.

²⁶ *Key Stage 2 Framework for languages* (DfES1721-2005-EN), DfES, 2005; www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/primary/publications/languages/framework/.

The practice was evaluated and refined by the group. The peripatetic teachers provided good role models for classroom teachers for teaching the language.

109. This model provided a way for a school to start teaching a language. There was time to reflect on how it could be done and for discussion with others. These schools became more autonomous in providing languages, at the same time making a start and being ready for the 2010 requirement.
110. The teaching seen during the survey was usually enthusiastic. Lessons were planned well and used an excellent range of resources very effectively, including the interactive whiteboard and sometimes the internet to present and practise language. However, pupils made too little use of ICT. There was a positive impact on teachers' practice for those who had taken part in training or made good use of a study visit abroad.
111. The large majority of teachers had at least satisfactory subject knowledge for the language level they were teaching. They had a good awareness of how to teach a language to young children and applied their general knowledge of primary teaching well to the teaching of a new language. They helped pupils to learn it through their knowledge of English and strengthened their oracy and literacy through the links they made.
112. However, several common weaknesses in teaching were observed during the survey that indicate areas for improvement.
- Teachers could do more to create opportunities for routine work in the target language, including calling the register, referring to the day and date each morning, and using numbers in the language. In one school, whenever pupils sat a test, their results were given in French: *'sept sur dix, monsieur'*.
 - Occasionally, too much unnecessary English was used in a language lesson, restricting pupils' opportunities for listening to and speaking the language they were learning. There was also scope for drawing more on the skills of pupils with home or heritage languages other than English. For example, getting to know what phrases look and sound like in Polish compared with English.
 - Lessons were not always matched well enough to the needs of lower or higher attaining pupils, although teaching assistants were often very effective in supporting pupils with specific difficulties and integrating them into the lesson. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities often participated very enthusiastically, particularly with the strong focus on listening and speaking, advancing their oral and literacy skills.
 - Assessment needed improvement, as it did during the earlier pathfinder inspections. Systems for assessment were not well developed and, although teachers gave feedback to pupils in lessons, few pupils knew how they could improve.

113. In the survey schools, headteachers and their senior leaders were committed to introducing languages. The better schools had a clear rationale for this and action plans were used to set priorities for development and review them. Headteachers were planning well for the training of teachers and coordinators; coordinators were managing well and were well informed. The schools were making good use of those in the regional and national networks to support them. Coherence, detail and tailoring plans carefully to schools' needs were key in moving towards providing entitlement, as in this example.

Although implementing French was in its very early stages, it had been exceptionally well planned and very little had been left to chance. The headteacher was very aware of research and inspection findings and had planned accordingly. Implementation had been integrated into the work of the school as a whole and was woven into the school's strategic plans. There was good support from the governing body, teachers and parents, all of whom had been kept well informed. To support the strategic plans for the school and the subject, additional plans put flesh on the bones. They referred in detail to planning, assessment, target-setting and, importantly, continuing professional development; these were all costed. The plans for professional development were very well considered and the headteacher had thought clearly about sustaining the subject. He put training in place for a classroom assistant, a French native speaker, to enable him to get a degree and become a graduate trainee. In the meantime, he raised his status and involved him more in teaching this new subject.

114. Weaknesses included rudimentary planning. Sometimes schools relied too much on external teachers who worked in isolation, occasionally with materials more suitable for secondary pupils, and with no opportunity for follow-up during the week after the lesson. Monitoring of teaching and learning was insufficient or absent. Governors were not always well informed and pupils' progress was not reported to parents.
115. Liaison with secondary schools about how pupils would progress was a widespread weakness. However, the better schools and areas surveyed were beginning to embrace it well.

The primary–secondary interface was a real strength of the project. The school had formed a partnership with other local primaries and the secondary school. At the request of the primary schools, a group was formed to decide how best to introduce languages in Key Stage 2 and have a sustainable model that would be firmly supported by the secondary school. The group employed a team of primary language teachers who were interviewed by the primary schools. A lead primary teacher taught Year 7 students at the secondary school, as well as one day a week in four primaries. She was therefore able not only to teach in Year 7 but also

to influence the Year 7 curriculum. The secondary school also had a Key Stage 2–3 liaison teacher who worked with the lead primary teacher, a linguist, and who oversaw the links with all the primary schools. Initial analysis of data showed that students in Year 8 were currently outperforming Year 9 in National Curriculum levels – they had both had a similar amount of French teaching – and that they were more enthusiastic. The secondary school altered its curriculum and speeded up the Key Stage 3 syllabus with the aim that more students should gain Levels 5 and 6 by the end of Year 8. This was effective but fewer students than they wished were gaining Level 7, and they focused on this for the next stage of development.

116. Schools usually used the Key Stage 2 framework and the QCA schemes of work for medium- and long-term planning unless they used a commercial publication. A difficulty in using the latter was that language learning objectives in individual lessons were not always clear: schools sometimes followed the schemes too closely without tailoring them to their own circumstances. Some schools with mixed-year classes had yet to work out their plans for ensuring that they planned effectively for progression.
117. The primary schools surveyed were generally good at linking their work in languages to their international dimension if they had developed one. Sometimes the international development triggered the language learning; in other schools, introducing language learning was the springboard for developing the international dimension.

The school's policy on modern language learning was central to its vision of an international dimension for its work and that of the local authority. Long-standing partnerships supported a wide range of exchanges in Europe and also mainland China. Teachers from the school took part in professional development by teaching English in the Chinese partner school, while native speaker language teachers from China provided teaching in Mandarin and aspects of Chinese culture to almost all pupils. English pupils benefited from an excellent model of pronunciation and learned at first hand what it meant to live in China. Similar work was done with Spain. Pupils developed very open and positive attitudes to people of different languages and cultures and enjoyed their language lessons very much.

Initial teacher training in primary modern languages

118. In 2008, as a follow-up to our 2003 report on introducing modern foreign languages into primary initial teacher education, we published a further report

on this TDA-funded initiative: *Primary languages in initial teacher training*.²⁷ The initiative has now expanded to involve 38 providers and four European languages. The report's survey, conducted in 2006/07, sought to evaluate:

- how well training prepared trainees to implement the languages strategy in primary schools
- the impact of the training on their knowledge and skills.

119. Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) visited 10 providers twice during 2006/07, including 40 trainees on their final placement during the summer term to observe them teaching languages and to discuss their courses with them. Additionally, 19 of the remaining 20 established providers took part in a telephone survey.
120. The courses observed provided good quality training with a stimulating combination of specialist central training and opportunities to teach in schools in England and abroad. They prepared the trainees well to teach languages in primary schools and to take on the role of languages coordinators. Most courses went beyond preparing trainees to teach speaking, listening, reading and writing and prepared them to teach pupils knowledge about language, strategies for learning a language and knowledge about the country. In this example, a trainee linked some learning of French and about France to the pupils' geography topic.

Year 4 pupils recalled words describing the sea from their previous French lesson. They then had to show recognition of these by making a wave, while listening to a recording of the song '*La mer*'. Using the interactive whiteboard they looked at images of coastlines – first from the previous week's example, Brittany, then moving on to the Mediterranean – and discussed these. This linked to their geography topic. They finished by learning how to ask for an ice cream – useful for the hotter weather in the south of France! The trainee teacher used well her photos from her placement in France. Pupils were enthralled.

121. The training worked best in the courses which had integrated the specialism fully within the overall primary programme for initial teacher training. The trainees learned how to embed the teaching of languages within the primary curriculum as well as to apply generic principles, such as in assessment, to teaching languages. In the less successful courses, the gap between the specialist training and the opportunities trainees had to practise what they had learned was too long.

²⁷ *Primary modern foreign languages in initial teacher training: a survey* (HMI 1768), Ofsted, 2003; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/1768. *Primary languages in initial teacher training* (070031), Ofsted, 2008; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070031.

122. Most but not all of the trainees recruited were highly competent in their teaching language. Almost all the courses helped them to improve further, for example by auditing their skills thoroughly at the beginning of the course and offering practical, interactive training sessions. For many of the trainees surveyed, the highlight of the course was the four-week placement abroad. This had many benefits, not just for the trainees' linguistic competence but also for increasing their understanding of the culture of the country and improving their teaching skills.
123. The quality of the school placements in England varied considerably because there was still a shortage of schools where primary languages were well developed over several year groups: few schools could provide trainees with enough opportunities to observe successful practice in language teaching or to teach their chosen language. Most of the trainees gained experience only of teaching beginners. In the best schemes, providers identified appropriate placements because they liaised closely with staff in the local authority and language college.
124. The trainees' teaching was mostly good. Its strengths included their infectious enthusiasm for the subject; their clear understanding of how languages support the primary curriculum; their creative use of a range of resources, including the electronic whiteboard and ICT; the lively activities they devised to motivate their pupils; and the effective way they supported lower attaining pupils. However, a majority were still finding their feet in using the target language to teach, and systematic assessment and recording of pupils' progress were rare.
125. Many schools currently do not have specialist mentors for languages. Therefore, although mentors gave the trainees useful generic advice, their feedback was rarely sufficiently specialist. Providers had sought to overcome this lack of expertise by using external specialists, such as advanced skills teachers, to observe trainees, and by offering training to enhance mentors' skills.
126. The impact of the courses was good. The trainees were highly motivated and very committed to the success of languages in primary schools. *Primary languages in initial teacher training* made several recommendations, in particular that the DCSF should provide further resources for training primary school staff to teach languages.

Arresting the decline of languages in Key Stage 4

Strategies to raise the take-up of languages in schools

'We want teenagers to understand that language skills make them more employable. We want more young Britons to have the confidence to live or work abroad for part of their careers. We want them ... to gain vital international experience to bring back to our businesses and public services. We want those working in our hotels, transport and tourist

services to be able to provide a warm welcome for foreign visitors. We want employees everywhere – and not just the high flyers – to be able to take advantage of global communications and not be held back by language and cultural barriers.²⁸

127. Since September 2004, when studying a language was no longer statutory in Key Stage 4, the number of students choosing to do so beyond Key Stage 3 has fallen dramatically with entries to GCSE, or other accreditation, below 50% of the cohort in 2007. The decline is most noticeable in German, but also substantial in French. There is a very slight increase in Spanish and other languages.²⁹ The number of pupils studying more than one language is negligible and has been since 2004. The exception to this general trend is in the one in five schools, of which about half are specialist languages colleges, which still make learning a language compulsory.

128. The reasons for this decline go to the heart of the problem with languages. Where pupils do not choose languages at the end of Key Stage 3, it might be because they perceive languages to be difficult, or that lessons are uninteresting and lacking relevance, or both of these. Boys in particular do not place great value on language learning and think that there are more interesting subjects to choose. This lack of value is sometimes also associated with the views of parents, irrespective of their more general aspirations for their children.

129. The National Languages Strategy offered schools the following guidance in considering their post-2004 curriculum.

‘In taking decisions about the curriculum at Key Stage 4, schools are expected to consider carefully the needs and aspirations of their pupils, and the provision of opportunities which will maximise their future employability. It will be for schools to decide how best to meet the needs of those pupils who have an aptitude for languages’.

It was envisaged that schools would explore a range of accredited language courses including vocational options ‘to offer language learning through a more diverse range of courses and curriculum contexts’. This has happened in only a minority of schools nationally.

130. In 2004 we conducted a telephone survey of 13 schools, with low entries to GCSE in 2003 and low numbers studying a language in Year 11, to investigate

²⁸ Taken from the statement issued by the National Centre for Languages (CILT) Employers’ Advisory Group for the 2007 European Day of Languages (26 September 2007); www.cilt.org.uk/news/archive/cnsweekly/2007/030_26_09_07.htm.

²⁹ This refers to all other European languages eligible under the current statute.

the schools' perceived reasons for low take-up in Key Stage 4. The results came as no surprise:

- the unpopularity of modern foreign languages with students
- poor performance at GCSE compared with other subjects
- difficulties in recruiting specialist staff
- unstable staffing
- weaker teaching in languages
- lack of value attributed to language learning by a school's previous leadership.

The community also had its part to play. In particular, in areas with high deprivation learning a language in school was given little credence. Even in the schools where one might have expected a community language to be popular, there was little pressure from the community because opportunities existed outside school. In areas with high numbers of refugees more value was placed on learning English.

131. Subsequent surveys have shown that these features are common to schools beyond those in the telephone survey. In the schools visited in the 2006/07 survey of languages, in around half of which take-up remained well below the target, several factors were identified. For instance, the options system offered new courses that pupils perceived to be more exciting. Additionally, the content of the GCSE examination did not match the interest of many pupils, especially boys, particularly where there was no deviation from the syllabus or opportunities devised for creativity and spontaneity. One boy spoke for many when he said, 'Other subjects appear easier, more interesting and more relevant to the future'.
132. Our language surveys, including focused visits to 13 schools in 2005, have sought to identify the factors which contribute to a high take-up of languages. Findings suggest that in the schools which are successful in promoting languages:
- there was an explicit expectation that all or almost all students would study a language in Key Stage 4
 - teaching and the curriculum were predominantly and consistently good, although rarely outstanding
 - leadership of the subject was good or better
 - senior leaders strongly supported languages: leadership at all levels created the right conditions for languages to flourish and there was a language ethos in the school
 - they were committed to preventing languages becoming an elitist subject.

Good subject leadership included:

- high-quality self-evaluation leading to sharply focused, effective action planning

- evaluation based on good analysis of data, monitoring of teaching and learning, scrutiny of written work and surveys of students' views
- a conscious raising of the profile of languages, in school and the wider community.

Our report on the 2005 survey included prompts for schools to conduct self-evaluation of their Key Stage 4 languages entitlement.³⁰

133. The 2005 survey sent a clear message to schools that they needed to consider:

- how to ensure that the overall broader provision in Key Stage 4 did not preclude students from continuing to study a language
- how to offer more interesting content, including improving the use of ICT, and a wider range of courses and accreditation
- ways to enable larger numbers of students to study two languages in Key Stage 4 or at least have the opportunity to do so.

134. Surveys since have shown that too many schools still offer only one language in Key Stage 4. As stated in paragraph 8, in January 2006 the then schools minister sent a letter to all schools asking them to make explicit in their self-evaluation forms their plans for improving their numbers and to set a benchmark for take-up of between 50% and 90%, depending on their starting points.³¹ In 2006/07 we focused on this in all of our modern languages inspections.

135. Over half the schools inspected in the 2006/07 survey had a take-up which ranged between 25% and 35%. The remainder, excluding four specialist language schools where it was a requirement, had a take-up of over 60% and two had maintained a languages for all policy and 100% entry. Of those with a low take-up, there were signs of improvement in about one in six. In one, improved marketing of the subject, removal of some of the barriers created by the options system, and better teaching in Key Stage 3 contributed to increasing the proportion choosing to study languages from 12% to 35%. In another, which had increased its take-up to over 60%, the inspector reported:

The school has improved the climate for learning languages following a period of acute staffing difficulties. These had had a negative impact on students' attitudes, especially in French, and take-up in Key Stage 4. The department has benefited from senior leaders' support in terms of a key appointment of a very strong teacher, improved accommodation and ICT resources. The impact of these measures shows in the improved achievement and standards at Key Stage 3 which are now in line with the

³⁰ 'You don't know at the time how useful they'll be...' *Implementing modern foreign languages entitlement in Key Stage 4* (HMI 2481), Ofsted, 2005; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2481.

³¹ The latest version of the self-evaluation form prompts schools to do so.

national average. Teaching and learning are consistently good with some outstanding features. This is a significant achievement, given previous issues. Languages are optional, but two-thirds of students choose at least one language and it is possible to choose more.

136. It remains to be seen whether the new opportunities that language departments are now being asked to consider will make a difference. The revised National Curriculum, the proposed new GCSEs and the languages diploma all provide scope for teachers to teach in contexts more interesting to young people. However, unless the relevance of language learning to employability and global citizenship is highlighted from early in Key Stage 3 and time is made both in the curriculum and through advice and guidance to put the case for learning a language, these initiatives may fail to arrest the decline in take-up.

In one school, nearing options time, the subject leader took each class in turn to teach an interesting and interactive lesson on the usefulness of language learning. This included snippets from the Internet of famous personalities talking about how useful it had been to them and games devised by the department to stimulate group and class discussion. Pupils said they had found it very helpful. It augmented well the displays around the school about the usefulness of languages.

137. Overall, the evidence gathered in 2006/07, including telephone calls to all the schools first telephoned in autumn 2004, showed that only two of the 30 schools surveyed had set a formal benchmark, or drawn up any formal plans for improving take-up, as requested by the schools minister. However, all is not as gloomy as it seems. Departments and schools were investigating routes to improvement. These included:

- greater flexibility in options so that students had more opportunity to create a personalised pathway
- improving quality in Key Stage 3 and providing accreditation at the end of Year 9 through the Languages Ladder³²
- offering tasters in different languages and re-introducing visits to target language countries for Years 7–9
- greater activity from languages departments at the time students were selecting their options
- investigating alternative accreditation.

³² The Languages Ladder is a voluntary national recognition scheme for languages which is one of the aims of the National Languages Strategy. It can lead to an external assessment offered by OCR (Asset Languages) and a qualification within the National Qualifications Framework. There are six stages. Assessments are in discrete skill areas and have been developed in 25 languages, although not all stages are available in all languages. An applied model, World of Work, is being piloted 2007–08. www.teachernet.gov.uk/languagesladder/.

138. As described in paragraph 8, in October 2006, as a result of the continuing decline in take-up, the Government asked Lord Dearing to carry out a languages review with the aim of revitalising secondary languages. The review broadly recommended:

- an overhaul of the assessment systems for languages
- the development of a more engaging secondary languages curriculum
- compulsory provision in Key Stage 2
- provision of greater opportunities for teachers to access training and continuing professional development
- the creation of an Open School for Languages to support pupils and teachers
- a more systematic campaign, involving businesses, higher education, embassies and the media, to make the case for languages.

Progress on developing these continues.

139. Although the review did not recommend a return to compulsory language learning in Key Stage 4, there are now greater expectations that schools will make languages an attractive option and set their benchmarks accordingly. Performance indicators measuring participation and attainment in languages will be included in Key Stage 4 achievement and attainment tables from 2008.³³ We will continue to evaluate take-up as a key issue in our survey inspections of languages, as well as, where appropriate, how schools have tackled it in their self-evaluation.

140. The perception of languages as a difficult subject remains, but this is particularly so where students are not enjoying their experience.

Specialism as a driver for improvement

141. Students in specialist language schools are required to learn a language in Key Stage 4.³⁴ In 2004/05 we reported that specialist language colleges had been successful in offering a wider range of languages, working with the community, particularly in primary schools, and in achieving higher percentages of grades A*–C at GCSE than the national averages for languages. In terms of the first two this was still the case, as illustrated by this school with a very good curriculum:

³³ The first indicator will show the percentage of the student cohort who have achieved the equivalent of a full GCSE A*–C (Level 2). The second indicator will show the percentage of the student cohort who have achieved the equivalent of a GCSE short course at Level 1, grades A*–G.
www.dcsf.gov.uk/performance/tables.

³⁴ There are currently 309 specialist language schools: 223 with single specialisms, 15 combined with another specialism, and 71 are additional specialisms. The number is increasing gradually. As a result of the languages review there is a target to reach 400 by 2010.

Almost all students have the opportunity to study French and German in Years 7 and 8, with the addition of Spanish in Year 9. All students are required to study at least one language at Key Stage 4 when Japanese is also introduced. Curriculum arrangements permit pupils to study two languages and approximately 30 choose to do so, with a small number studying three. An outstanding feature of the sixth form provision is the requirement for all Year 12 students to continue to study a language, supported by the offer of the RSA business languages course in five languages. Extra-curricular provision in languages is very rich and the three exchanges, lunchtime language clubs and other international links enjoy good take-up and raise pupils' confidence in using language and their general cultural awareness.

142. Whole-school inspection reports from 2005/07 also show that the clearest impact of specialist language status is in relation to the school's curriculum, for example:

'... specialist languages status significantly enhances the curriculum. Modern foreign languages are a significant aspect of all main school students' education and the good range of courses and opportunities for students to take GCSE and Advanced Subsidiary in earlier years are further enhanced by considerable overseas visits and other extra-curricular activities...'

'...the use of modern foreign languages in a practical context, such as the immersion opportunities in personal, social and health education, brings authenticity to language learning.'

'Provision for modern foreign languages is strong. Extra-curricular examination courses in home languages promote the achievement and confidence of students from minority ethnic backgrounds.'

143. In terms of examination results, however, specialist language colleges are no longer performing higher than the national averages. The reason for this is their success in getting almost all students through to GCSE examinations, with a full range of attainment. This contrasts with the situation in schools where the number of entries has declined but results have risen, mainly because of the larger proportion of higher attaining students continuing to study a language.
144. As reported in 2004/05, specialist schools faced many of the problems faced by other maintained schools in maintaining consistently high quality language provision, including similar difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff. However, commonly, the specialist language colleges now offer a broader range of languages, enrich the curriculum generally through a very wide range of extra-curricular activities, and do outreach work beyond the school, in particular working with their family of primary schools, either teaching in them or helping them to develop their language work, or both of these.

Adult language learning

145. One of the measures of success of the National Languages Strategy was that the demand for language learning from adults would increase. This is viable only if supply meets the demand. In 2006, the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) reported on the supply of language teaching for adults.³⁵ This was at a time when the number of language learners post 14 in schools, in further education colleges and in higher education continued to decline, along with a shortage of qualified teachers in many languages. The report also reflected detailed research by the National Centre for Languages (CILT).
146. Unlike other sectors, the demand from adults for learning a language is buoyant. However, neither the quality nor quantity of the provision met this demand. In 2007, a survey of languages by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education found that 4% of adults were learning a language compared to 5% in 1999, but that almost a third of the survey's respondents wanted to do so.³⁶
147. ALI's survey identified seven barriers that were impeding the successful implementation of the National Languages Strategy in adult and work-based learning:
- the absence of local languages strategies
 - insufficient co-operation between providers
 - insufficient specialist curriculum leadership and management
 - a national shortage of qualified language tutors
 - accreditation
 - insufficient guidance for adult language learners
 - insufficient opportunities for language learning in vocational and work-based programmes.
148. Because of a lack of local strategies for languages, the range of languages and levels offered in an area was random. Very few local learning and skills councils had drawn up plans to encourage language learning with clearly defined targets for language provision by language, level, number of learners, gender and ethnicity. Nationally, the Learning and Skills Council had been slow to require local councils to do so. As a result, the languages taught are not necessarily those which will most benefit the economy in the future. Without a local

³⁵ *Languages for adults: overcoming the barriers*, ALI, 2006; available as a microsite via the Ofsted website www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/20071016.

³⁶ Y Dutton and S Meyer, *Figures of speech, the 2007 NIACE survey of languages* (9781862013292), National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, Local Government Association and European Union European Social Fund UK, 2007. The figures, based on responses from about 5000 adults, represent a decrease of half a million adults. However, the figures included learners who were learning through 'teach yourself' methods and distance learning. Only 18% of those learning a language were doing so through formal learning by attending a course.

strategy, progression routes were often poor. Many providers saw language courses as recreational and gave them a low priority.³⁷

149. Cooperation amongst local providers to ensure coherent provision of language learning was rare. Providers competed to attract both funding and the limited number of qualified language tutors. Insufficient cooperation resulted in duplication of courses, gaps, poor opportunities for progression, and the inefficient deployment of the already inadequate supply of qualified tutors. Duplicated provision reduced enrolments and led to the cancellation of courses.
150. Providers relied heavily on part-time tutors who often worked in isolation. Generally, specialist curriculum leadership and management were insufficient to ensure that these tutors were managed closely. Access to language-specific resources, advice and guidance was often insufficient. Few adult and community providers appointed a language specialist to plan provision, conduct quality assurance or provide staff development and mentoring.
151. A national shortage of qualified tutors meant that it was not unusual for providers to recruit native language speakers who were completely untrained in the methodology of language teaching. Many part-time tutors had few opportunities for specialist teacher training and professional development. Much of the teaching seen was uninspiring, with insufficient activity for learners and too much use of English rather than the language being taught.
152. Although the National Languages Strategy emphasised that any accreditation for adult learners should be relevant to their needs and aspirations, much of what was available was not relevant. Confusion and uncertainty about funding had led managers to convert non-accredited provision to accredited provision. If adult learners found this was inappropriate to their needs, or if it failed to take their previous experience into account, their motivation suffered and they were quick to leave.
153. Prospective adult language learners often did not receive sufficient advice and guidance to help them to choose the most suitable course. Tutors did not always do enough in the early stages to assess learners' previous experience and their reasons for enrolling; as a result, learning activities were not matched to individuals' learning goals. Their progress was not recorded and discussed in enough detail to help learners improve. Resources were often limited.
154. Opportunities for language learning in vocational and work-based programmes for adults were insufficient. Languages for business and employability were not given a high enough priority. Competence in one or more foreign languages had not been recognised as a key skill. Language learning was often classed as

³⁷ In the survey by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 25% of respondents were learning a language related to employment, including for their current work, to enhance their CV, to gain employment or a mixture of these.

a leisure activity, reinforcing the perception that it had no intrinsic value. Where colleges offered suitable areas of learning, such as hospitality and business administration, discrete language units were sometimes available as an additional skill. However, their take-up, alongside vocational programmes in further education colleges, was very low.

155. These weaknesses highlighted the need for action nationally, by local learning and skills councils; by partnerships between providers and employers, and by the providers themselves in raising the quality of provision.

Notes

This report uses evidence from:

- whole-school inspections 2004/2007
- 120 focused modern language survey inspections in schools by HMI and Additional Inspectors during the period 2005–2007 (60 primary; 60 secondary)
- 10 focused visits relating to the Secondary Strategy in 2005/06
- 13 visits to schools relating to Key Stage 4 in spring 2005
- telephone surveys to 26 schools between 2004 and 2006
- visits to 10 primary language pathfinder LAs and their schools in 2004/05
- two visits each to 10 ITT providers and telephone calls to a further 18 in 2006/07
- visits to four providers of intensive extension language courses during summer 2007
- visits to 11 ITT providers, 16 related schools and 26 telephone calls in connection with Every Language Matters.

It also draws upon other evidence, including a range of publications and discussions with agencies and teachers interested in modern languages; and ALI's 2006 on languages in adult education *Languages for adults: overcoming the barriers*.

The report does not deal with issues in post-16 languages (16–18) individually, since relatively few lessons were seen during the 2005/07 survey. This reflects the small number of students studying a language at school post-16, as well as the inclusion in the survey of schools without sixth forms. It also reflects a key issue for languages nationally, underlining the urgent need to increase take-up in Key Stage 4. Ofsted is currently conducting a survey of good practice in colleges across the subject sector (languages, literature and culture).

Further information

DCSF (formerly DfES)

Languages: the next generation. The final report and recommendations of the Nuffield Languages Inquiry, the Nuffield Foundation, 2000;

<http://languages.nuffieldfoundation.org/languages/inquiry/in0000000555.asp> *Languages for all, languages for life: a strategy for England*, DfES 2002;
www.dcsf.gov.uk/languagesstrategy

Framework for teaching modern foreign languages: Years 7, 8 and 9 (0084/2003), DfES, 2003; www.dcsf.gov.uk/languages/DSP_whatson_secondary_ks3.cfm *The Key Stage 2 framework for languages* (Ref 1721), DfES, 2005;
www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/primary/publications/languages/framework/

Languages review (ISBN 978-1-84478-907-8), DfES, 2007;
www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/primary/publications/languages/framework/

Languages in Key Stage 4, Ten questions and answers for school leaders, DCSF, 2007;
<http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00669-2007>

Ofsted

Primary modern foreign languages in initial teacher training: a survey (HMI 1768), Ofsted, 2003; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/1768

'You don't know at the time how useful they'll be ...' Implementing modern foreign languages entitlement in Key Stage 4 (HMI 2481), Ofsted, 2005;
www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2481 *Implementing languages entitlement in primary schools: an evaluation of progress in ten Pathfinder LEAs* (HMI 2476), Ofsted, 2005;
www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2476

Evaluating internationalism in schools (HMI 2683), Ofsted, 2006;
www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/2683 *Every language matters: an evaluation of the extent and impact of initial training to teach a wider range of world languages* (070030), Ofsted, 2008; www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070030

Primary languages in initial teacher training (070031), Ofsted, 2008;
www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/070031 *Languages for adults – overcoming the barriers*, Adult Learning Inspectorate, 2006;
www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/20071016

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

Modern foreign languages in the Key Stage 4 curriculum, QCA, 2004;
www.qca.org.uk/qca_6980.aspx

Training and Development Agency for Schools

Primary languages in initial teacher training (TDA 0223), TDA, 2007.
www.tda.gov.uk/about/publicationslisting/TDA0223.aspx? *Common reference framework – Anglo/French* (TDA 0447), TDA, 2007.
www.tda.gov.uk/about/publicationslisting/TDA0447.aspx?

Key websites

www.cilt.org.uk

The National Centre for Languages (CILT)

A major site for information and resources for language teaching and learning and for language trends.

www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/schemes

DCSF strategies and schemes of work in modern foreign languages.

www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/primary

The Primary National Strategy and details of the Languages Ladder accreditation scheme.

www.qca.org.uk/curriculum

This includes the revised QCA schemes of work.

www.ncaction.org.uk/subjects/mfl

National Curriculum in Action

www.nacell.org.uk/resources

National primary website, which is managed by CILT

Includes *European language portfolio – junior version*;

www.nacell.org.uk/resources/pub_cilt/portfolio.htm.

www.tda.gov.uk

Training and Development Agency for Schools

www.multiverse.ac.uk

Training providers share best practice on multilingualism and multiculturalism.

www.britishcouncil.org

Details of language courses abroad and applications for foreign language assistants.

www.globalgateway.org/isa

The International Schools Award.

Annex 1

Languages for All: Languages for Life

In 2002 the Government set out its strategy and long-term objectives for language learning in *Languages for All: Languages for Life*.³⁸ Its measures for success are quoted below.

Measuring success

'We expect to measure the success of our strategy against the following outcomes:

- all learners should have their learning recognised
- primary children at Key Stage 2 should have an entitlement to high quality teaching and learning that instils enthusiasm in learning languages, is based on flexible experience which makes the most of ICT and sets a foundation for future learning and success
- secondary pupils should have high quality teaching and learning in Key Stage 3 and a flexible curriculum and range of routes to support success during the 14–19 phase
- schools should be able to draw on the people they need to deliver language learning and be supported to deliver high quality teaching and learning
- the demand for language learning from adults should increase
- businesses should be involved in supporting language learning and championing the importance of language skills
- businesses should be able to recruit employees with a wider range of language skills to better meet their business needs.

The Government is determined to ensure that languages take their proper place at the heart of initiatives and activities to further the wider social, economic and political agenda. A key part of this is communicating the importance of languages, both at national and local level. We will identify and expand opportunities for language use in printed, electronic and broadcast media and communications. We look to our key partners to play their part to build success.'

³⁸ *Languages for All: Languages for Life, A Strategy for England*, DfES, 2002; www.dcsf.gov.uk/languagesstrategy.