

Languages Survey Highlights Challenges of English Baccalaureate for Schools

The results of the latest Language Trends survey of secondary schools show that the number of students choosing to take a language at 14 is still in decline and that the amount of language teaching offered at key stage 3 is also falling.

The findings, based on a survey sent to 2000 schools in England, revealed that the proportion of state schools where more than 50 per cent of pupils study a language in year 10 has dropped from 41% in 2009 to 36% in the current school year. One in five maintained schools have shortened Key stage 3 to two years, which significantly reduces the amount of time spent on language teaching.

The impact of language learning in primary schools is now starting to be seen in secondary school. Four out of five schools receive significant numbers of pupils who have studied a language at key stage 2. However, the survey reveals that levels of learning are not yet consistent and there is a continuing need for support and training for languages in primary schools and better planning and liaison in secondary schools to build on prior learning.

The survey revealed concern among teachers over the recent changes to the GCSE assessment regime which they feel have a “detrimental effect on pupils’ motivation and enjoyment of language learning.” Around 45% of maintained schools now offer alternative accreditation to GCSE and A level and feedback on these is very positive, although this is tempered by their concerns over the future viability of the qualifications if they do not count towards the English Baccalaureate.

Kathryn Board, Chief Executive of CILT, said: This report sets out the gap to be closed if we are to rebuild provision for languages in schools where the subject has been pushed to the margins in recent years. However, in the context of the current curriculum review, it is important not be defeatist about the extent of this gap, but rather look to the many examples of successful provision as inspiring models of what can be achieved. The decision to include languages in the English Baccalaureate signals the Government’s recognition that a degree of competence in a foreign language is an essential part of everyone’s education. This is a view shared by many in the language teaching community and beyond and I am sure we will see this reflected in responses to the curriculum review.”

French, Spanish and German are still the most commonly taught languages and the number of schools offering Spanish continues to increase. Other languages are increasingly being offered in the state sector outside curriculum time or as an enrichment option post-16. Pupils attending independent schools are more likely to have opportunities to study them for example, Mandarin is offered in 37% of independent schools as oppose to 16% of state schools.

Linda Parker, Director of the Association for Language Learning, said: “This year’s survey points to mixed fortunes for languages in state secondary schools. Teachers often have to struggle against the odds to get the curriculum time and structures they need to teach languages effectively. There are huge contrasts in participation, with too few students from schools in the most challenged and socially deprived areas learning languages. Curriculum change—which we hope will be an opportunity for a revival in language learning- is coming. We need to ensure that there will be opportunities for all pupils, regardless of their background, to follow suitable pathways in language learning throughout their secondary education. To do this well we will need highly-trained teachers with good professional development opportunities and supportive school structures”.

Press Briefing

9.30am for 10 am Wednesday January 26th 2011

First Floor, CBI Conference Centre,

Centre Point,

103 New Oxford Street,

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<http://maps.google.co.uk/maps/place?cid=9655873827362943503&q=CBI+london&hl=en&gl=uk>

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The report will be available at www.cilt.org.uk/research_and_statistics.aspx

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Notes to Editors

1. Languages Trends report

The Language Trends survey was carried out in autumn 2010 by CILT, the National Centre for Languages with support from the Association for Language Learning and the Independent Schools' Modern Language Association. It is based on responses to a questionnaire sent to a representative sample of 2,000 secondary schools in England (1,500 maintained schools and 500 independent schools). The survey has been carried out annually since 2002 to track developments in language provision and take-up in secondary schools. Findings are based on responses from 711 schools – a response rate of 36%.

2. **CILT, the National Centre for Languages**

CILT works to convince people of all ages, at all stages of learning and in all walks of life, of the benefits of learning and using more than one language. We do this by using our expertise as the National Centre for Languages to influence policy and practice and to support the development of language professionals. In everything we do, we aim to inspire people to develop a life-long appreciation of languages and cultures. CILT, the National Centre for Languages is a registered company no. 5375352 and an independent charity number 1108543. www.cilt.org.uk

3. ALL is the major UK subject association for teachers of foreign languages at all levels in the UK.

www.all-languages.org.uk

4. **ISLMA, The Independent Schools' Modern Languages Association**

ISLMA exists to provide a forum for modern language teachers in independent secondary schools to meet, share ideas and inform themselves about and contribute to developments in Modern Languages Teaching.

www.ismla.co.uk