The MFL Student Mentoring Project
Global Futures Update January-June 2021

The following report provides details of the progress of each of the three streams of activity relating to the MFL Student Mentoring project. These are:

1. The Year 8/9 Online Mentoring Programme, led by Tallulah Llewellyn Machin and Glesni Owen.
2. The Teacher Resources and School Support Programme, led by Becky Beckley.
3. The Post-16 Languages Recovery Project, led by Becca Kirkby (who has now left the project).

All project streams have achieved huge success in the face of great diversity. The following report outline the headline statistics, key challenges and successes for each project, and offers an insight into some of the user feedback received to date.

We are delighted that funding has now been confirmed for the project from 1st April 2021-31 March 2022. There will be some key changes to the team and project delivery.

1. Year 8/9 Online Mentoring – conclusion of year 2020-2021.

Project Summary
This stream is the core focus of the project and has aimed in the last 12 months to support language appetite and aspiration throughout the course of the pandemic. The approach of this period has been one of sustaining motivation and has not implemented pupil surveying in order to select pupils. This was not achievable given the context.

Key statistics
The number of schools who **have engaged with the project** during the two semesters are as follows:

- GWE schools: 16 schools
- ERW schools: 22 schools
- EAS schools: 16 schools (with a further 6 who contacted but were unable to successfully participate)
- CSC schools: 14 schools
- NPT schools: 2 schools

NPT= Neath Port Talbot

The project worked with **67 schools** in the first semester and **43 schools** during the second semester.

Due to difficulty in participating with the online element of mentoring for one or both semesters, we also had the following number of schools engaging with the project during the 2020/21 cycle:

- Schools that only had one group of pupils engaging with mentoring: **7 schools**
- Schools that dropped out between semester 1 and 2: **8 schools.**
- Schools who contacted the project but were unable to participate: **16 schools.**

In total, the Year 8/9 Project has worked with **70 individual schools** across both semesters, during a challenging period in the education sector. Appetite for the project has not decreased and schools have found the online option to be extremely useful for those who were previously unable to engage.

Successes

Despite all the challenges of the last year, the project has achieved incredible buy-in and support from schools. This is clear evidence of the need for the initiative.

- In total, **28 new schools engaged** with the project for the first time during the 2020/21 cycle. The project managed to work with **19 new schools** in geographically harder to reach areas due to the online approach. These schools wouldn't have had access to the project previously.
- Learners are enthusiastic about the experience and the use of digital platforms (MS Teams and Sway) has helped keep the sessions interactive and engaging.
- The project established a partnership with First Campus to the benefit of 6 schools in the CSC consortia. Two mentors were offered to 5 of these schools, with those mentors receiving additional training from the FC staff.
- We've had over 1,000 responses to our pupil survey from those who have participated in the mentoring in the last two semesters.
- Working with **UWTSD** to establish a new partnership.

Challenges

It goes without saying that Covid-19 and the uncertainty and instability that this has caused for teachers and pupils has been the greatest challenge this year. Navigating school closures, year group isolations, teacher illness, university challenges and general anxiety have been the greatest challenges encountered. Minor challenges that were present during face-to-face mentoring have also in some circumstances been exacerbated by Covid-19. These include:

- Slower communication with teachers who are finding juggling the situation very taxing.
- Pupils overwhelmed and digitally fatigued from online learning.
- Each school has different number of hours of live lessons, which means that the project team have had to discuss with individual schools how the mentoring would work for semester 2.
- The gaining of parental consent to engage mentors and mentees through MS Teams slowed down the start of online sessions and also made some schools more reluctant to participate because of the logistical challenges.
- Engagement has been difficult in some schools where pupils have been working asynchronously. Generally speaking, engagement is also harder to measure and the project relies more acutely on teachers providing feedback.

Award and Recognition Ceremonies

At the end of each year, the project invites mentees to the partner universities for a day of language workshops. Given the continued restrictions due to Covid-19, this was not possible in 2020-21. Instead, the project team created online language taster sessions and virtual university tours. These were supported by the mentors and designed to encourage an exploration of different languages and cultures around the world as well as to see the different types of students who go on to do languages at university, such as through joint honours programmes.

The project team also sent out trophies to the schools who were new to the project and created a certificate for mentees to acknowledge their achievement. The resources, trophies and certificates sought to maintain the five key aims of the annual Award and Recognition Ceremonies:

1. Draw the mentoring relationship to a close and celebrate achievements.
2. Raise aspirations for Higher Education.
3. Showcase the partner universities and encourage mentees to see themselves there.
4. Provide language workshops to highlight the breadth of language study and increase curiosity for language learning.
5. Create a space for mentees to ask questions about university and student life.

The links to the resources are as follows:

- University Tours
- Teithiau o Amgylch y Prifysgolion
- Language Tasters
- Sesiynau Blas ar iaith

2. Year 8/9 Online Mentoring – start of year 2021/2022.

Project Summary

The project has received funding to work with a minimum of 45 schools and a maximum of 65 schools in the coming academic year. Two rounds of 6 sessions of mentoring will be delivered to Year 8 and 9 learners. Dependent on the public health context, the project would look to offer relevant modes of engagement which might include: fully digital, blended and fully face-to-face. It is anticipated that a fully face-to-face delivery is highly unlikely.

All mentor training will be delivered online (via Aula). The majority of the training will be delivered in-house. Turbo-mentoring will be reintroduced where desirable and possible and the project will continue to consider the best format for Award and Recognition Ceremonies.

Delivery Modes

A move to online mentoring in 2020-21 allowed the project team to establish processes and best practice for a fully online or blended mode of mentoring. Given continued uncertainty around the Covid-19 pandemic and the need to manage restrictions at a national, university and school level, mentoring will continue to be delivered fully online in the first term of 2021-22. The project will review the situation again in November 2021 to decide on the best course of action for the second term, with face-to-face mentoring reintroduced if possible. The team are currently working on facilitating online mentoring over both Microsoft Teams and Google Classroom to remove barriers for schools.

School Recruitment

For the first time, schools have been asked to complete an application to be part of the project in the coming year. This is to ensure that the project is working with the schools who are most in need and

a fair geographic split across Wales is maintained. The interest from schools has risen over the years meaning that there are far more schools interested in the project than the resource available. Schools who worked with the project in 2019-20 and 2020-21 have been emailed by the project team and invited to complete an application. In addition, the consortia leads have invited the schools they are aware of that require the most help. As of 2nd June 2021, the school applications are as follows:

- **Total: 30**
- ERW: 7
- GWE: 5
- CSC: 10
- EAS: 8

The deadline for school applications is 16th July 2021, after which schools will be either accepted on to the project or placed on a reserve list.

Mentor Recruitment

In 2020-21, the project established a new partnership with the University of Wales Trinity St. David which opens up an additional pool of students with more diverse degree programmes. For this coming year, the project team also sought to recruit from other departments and faculties, beyond modern languages, in order to reach a wider pool of students and those with more diverse language profiles and nationalities. This has worked well so far as the project has seen a greater number of students with Mandarin, Cantonese and Malay apply to join the project. As of 2nd June 2021, the mentor applications are as follows:

- **Total: 36**
- Cardiff University: 23
- Swansea University: 6
- Bangor University: 5
- Aberystwyth University: 2
- University of Wales Trinity St. David: 0

The deadline for mentor applications is 25th June 2021, after which students will be either accepted on to the training, interviewed or placed on a reserve list.

Processes Review

In May and June 2021, the project team have been reviewing and cataloguing the processes involved in the running of the project. This is to ensure that the processes are as streamlined as possible, document templates are used year on year and all team members are trained for a variety of roles. Guidance documents have been created for each step of the project to ensure that all learnings have been documented as best practice and to ease the introduction of any new team members in the future. This review has increased the professional rigour of the project and sought to ensure a continuity of delivery should any team member leave the project.

3. Teacher Resources - conclusion of year 2020-2021.

Project Summary

This new stream of work, developed since September 2020, has introduced learners and teachers to new ways of teaching and learning through Genial.ly, Padlet and Planet eStream. The resources provide blended learning opportunities as well as engagement with digital learning formats that support the ambitions of learners and teachers.

Schools engagement

Schools were invited to express interest in working with this stream of the project.

Interest was received from the following number of schools:

GwE	CSC	ERW	EAS
19	21	14	16
		Total schools engaged = 71	

NOTE: Christ College in Brecon which is an independent school also has access to the resources

Resource creation

The project lead for this work stream has liaised with the consortia leads to support the creation of the resources. All resources have been produced bilingually and support the ambitions of the Curriculum for Wales. All resources are supported by instructions for both teachers and pupils.

So far, the project has produced the following:

Target range	Number completed (number in bracket indicates number including the Welsh versions)	Description
KS3	4 (8)	Discrete online learning modules with interactive units focusing on the 'essential learning 'of the Curriculum for Wales.
KS4	33 (66)	Discrete online learning video quizzes presented via MS 'sways' including scaffolded learning activities and interactive video quizzes in the target language.
KS3/4	1 (2) Infographic about benefits of studying languages	To support teachers for encouraging uptake at GCSE and A Level.
KS3-5	18 (36) display posters	To be used as conversation stimulus/translation activities.

4. Teacher Resources - start of year 2021/2022.

Project Summary

This stream of the project will now focus on **sustainability and reach** by developing resources that will be accessible to all schools in Wales **via the MFL Mentoring website.** The resources will be targeted at **Year 7 learners** and will **support actively the transition to the Curriculum for Wales**.

These resources will develop **a positive approach to international languages** by opening out learner perceptions of what languages are, how they function and what place they hold in our communities. These resources will be designed to be used by any teacher, encouraging greater cross-curricular working and encouraging a wider understanding of the intersections between languages and other subject areas.

The resources will also provide practical support for implementing the Curriculum for Wales, providing inspiration for how to develop multilingual resources and mindsets and will encourage exploration and curiosity driven learning. The approach will be less about knowledge gained and more about where this learning experience takes the learner next.

The resources will provide support and benefit in the following ways:

1. The resources will be **inclusive of all learners**, aiming to include under-represented groups and marginalised languages and communities.
2. The resources will **show the whole world**, and will not focus on only known communities, countries, stories or histories.
3. The resources will **increase the reach of the project** and allow us to provide **support to more schools.** This is particularly important this year as we will work with a maximum of 65 schools. Rather than only being able to work with the targeted mentees, the project will access more learners.
4. The resources will support teachers to consider how they will approach the Curriculum for Wales.
5. The resources will be **available to all schools in Wales** and will be **relevant for a number of years**, providing greater longevity than one-off events-based work.
6. All resources will be **available bilingually on the MFL Mentoring website.**

Project Components

This stream of work with have three core functions:

1. **Management of collaboration and stakeholder input.**
2. **Creation of the resources.**
3. **Small-scale user-testing before full launch.**

Each of these functions is outlined in more detail below.

1. Management of collaboration and stakeholder input.

In order to ensure that the resources are fit for purpose the project will assemble a small focus group of teachers, recruited via the consortia leads. These teachers will provide critical feedback and input into the development of the resources at key points. Opportunities to provide input will be

time sensitive to ensure that the project can deliver against its objectives. Feedback will therefore be dependent on the responsiveness of the focus group.

In addition, the project has established connections with the University of Ulster and their flagship project on linguistics, focused on raising language awareness and sensitisation. The project will liaise with the University of Ulster to establish a partnership with them to support the development of the resources. This will ensure that the resources have a robust research evidence-base and robust support base.

2. Creation of the resources.

The project will lead on the creation of the resources including design and delivery of all learning assets. This will include identifying the best-fit technology and the learning methodologies underpinning the resources. Approaches such as Object-Based Learning will be considered as key underpinning frameworks.

Welsh Government has asked that these resources develop the approach taken to the language taster resources developed in the grant cycle 2020-2021. A link to these can be found below:

- Language Tasters (padlet.org)
- Sesiynau Blas ar iaith (padlet.org)

The following is a proof of concept that is offered for Welsh Government approval:
https://mflmentoring.padlet.org/mflmentoring/Year7

These will be available in Cymraeg and English.

3. Small-scale user-testing prior to launch.

In order to ensure that the resources are fit-for-purpose, the project proposes undertaking a short period of user-testing where trial schools will be asked to use the resources and collate feedback from learners and teachers. This will ensure that the resources are effective.

A short report will be published with the outcomes from the user-testing which will inform a further iteration of the resources before they are officially launched.

Please note, this configuration is yet to be approved by Welsh Government and is therefore subject to change.

5. Post-16 Languages Recovery Project

Project Summary

The project resumed activity on the 18th of January 2021 with a further 5 weeks of activities and an additional week of activity every day throughout the February half term (15th-19th February). This week-long festival was called the Linking Languages Festival.

Key Statistics

- Over the two five-week and the conferences we received over **700 instances of attendance**.
- **39 different schools and colleges** across Wales engaged with the weekly sessions.
- In addition to the 39 schools who engaged with the core programme, **a further 11 schools engaged with the conferences.**
- A total of **50 different schools** and colleges have engaged with the project to date.

Project End

Funding for this element of the project has now ended. There will be no continuation of this work.

6. Other Outcomes

- **Bid with ColegauCymru:** unfortunately, we were unsuccessful with our bid to deliver a programme in collaboration with ColegauCymru for the FE sector.

- **Funding for Post-16 project:** due to challenging timelines and lack of resource available, the project will not apply for First Campus or Reaching Wider funding at this time. The project resource is being directed into creating sustainability within the project and maintaining quality provision.

- **Innovation funding:** CG and LJ have won funding from the Cardiff University ESRC Impact Accelerator Fund to explore potential sustainability structures for the project.

- **New logo:** the team have developed a new logo retaining the most well-known elements of the current brand name of the project. This logo has been accepted and will be used on all materials relating to the project.

- **Website improvements:** the website is still undergoing improvements. It will continue to be available in its current iteration until the new website is launched. The new version of the website will host the resources that the project team creates.

- **Team availability:** to meet the demands of the new funding cycle, some colleagues will now work part time on the project. Tallulah Machin and Glesni Owen will remain to work on the project for 5 days a week. Rebecca Beckley and Lucy Jenkins will be working on the project 4 days a week. Rebecca Kirkby left the project team for a new role in Widening Participation in mid-March.

- **University bursary system:** university partners are now able to bid for financial support per student they recruit. The application process is now open to all 4 partner universities.

7. Project dissemination/collaborations

- LJ and TM presented at Cardiff University's Multilingualism network event on languages and SHAPE, 26th February, 2020.

- The project was raised as part of a debate in the Senedd on international languages by former MS Suzy Davies. The project was praised extensively by the then Shadow Education Minister, as part of a short debate entitled "Why don't we love international languages". You can access the transcript from the debate [here](#). 3rd February, 2020.

- LJ presented at the Government Events 3rd Annual Modern Foreign Languages conference, 24th March, 2020.

- LJ met with colleagues from Oxford University interested in developing outreach in linguistics in Wales, April 2020.

- LJ met with colleagues from Durham University interested in developing a languages mentoring project, May 2020.

- LJ and GO met with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol who expressed interest in the mentoring model. Of particular note was their delight with the number of welsh medium schools with whom we are engaging. Potential partnership models are under discussion. May, 2020.