

Meeting date Monday, 5th August:

Attendees

- Lynne Neagle – Cabinet Secretary for Education (CSE)
- Professor Claire Gorrara - Dean of Research and Innovation, Professor of French College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (CG)
- Lucy Jenkins – MFL mentoring programme Project Director - Cardiff University (LJ)

Note

CSE welcomed CG and LJ to the meeting and noted her interest in international languages.

■■■ and ■■■ outlined the challenges around international languages provision and the role of the mentoring programme and their work in 123 secondary schools across Wales.

The programme targets learners who are uncertain about taking an international language at GCSE, with a 36% uptake of learners choosing IL GCSE because of the programme, compared the national average of 10%. The programme would also shortly be undertaking an evaluation with initial findings in December to support their next steps.

The programme collects a range of information including pupil survey, with over 30,000 learners surveyed since the start of the programme. The top three reasons learners gave for not choosing international languages were:

- that they were boring.
- a lack confidence in attempting them.
- they were not needed/useful for their future career choices.

From a list of favourite subjects compiled as part of the pupil survey, English was top, with international languages 14th and Welsh 13th. It was noted that this was the first year that A-level Welsh entries have fallen below international languages entries.

CSE said that engaging learners was crucial and discussing both the cultural and practical uses of international languages. There were the myths around language learning which needed to be busted to highlight their benefits, skills they could develop and demonstrate the career choices available.

CSE asked if there any problems recruiting mentors [REDACTED] –There are over 200 applications each year from a variety of schools in the university with a rigorous screening process.

CSE noted the development of the Welsh language bill and its link to the CFER, asking whether sufficient value and visibility was given to languages in schools. CSE explained that she was surprised that Ysgol Gymraeg Gwynllyw now only offered GCSE French. ■■■ noted that there should be a degree of accountability placed on schools to prevent secondary schools narrowing provision and dropping languages.

CSE asked if schools were collaborating with one another to support their learners. This was undertaken in some areas as was the use of the E-sgol programme, which offered on-line classes to link-up learners. Although considered beneficial it noted that this was not a substitute for face-to-face learning.

To better understand this, an audit of which schools were narrowing provision could be undertaken to map these and ask for their rationale for dropping subjects. Officials would explore this with Consortia/partnerships.

CSE thanked CG and LJ for their time and presentation.

Actions

- Cardiff to share the learner survey data and results of the evaluation with CSE
- WG to speak to consortia to undertake audit of schools narrowing provision.

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