

the leading voice for education

Suzanne O'Farrell
ASCL MFL Consultant

@ofarrellsuzanne

Suzanne.ofarrell@ascl.org.uk



“The decision to learn a foreign language is an act of friendship. It is an outstretched hand.”

John Le Carre



Challenges in the system

Teacher
supply &
retention

Pressures of
accountability

Funding

Updated KCSIE
guidance

Historic severe
grading of MFL

Brexit

Reformed
GCSE



Opportunities

MFL hubs &
centre of
excellence

DFE & British
Council's work

Ofsted's revised
framework

Ofqual's
work

Calls for a
national
strategy for
MFL

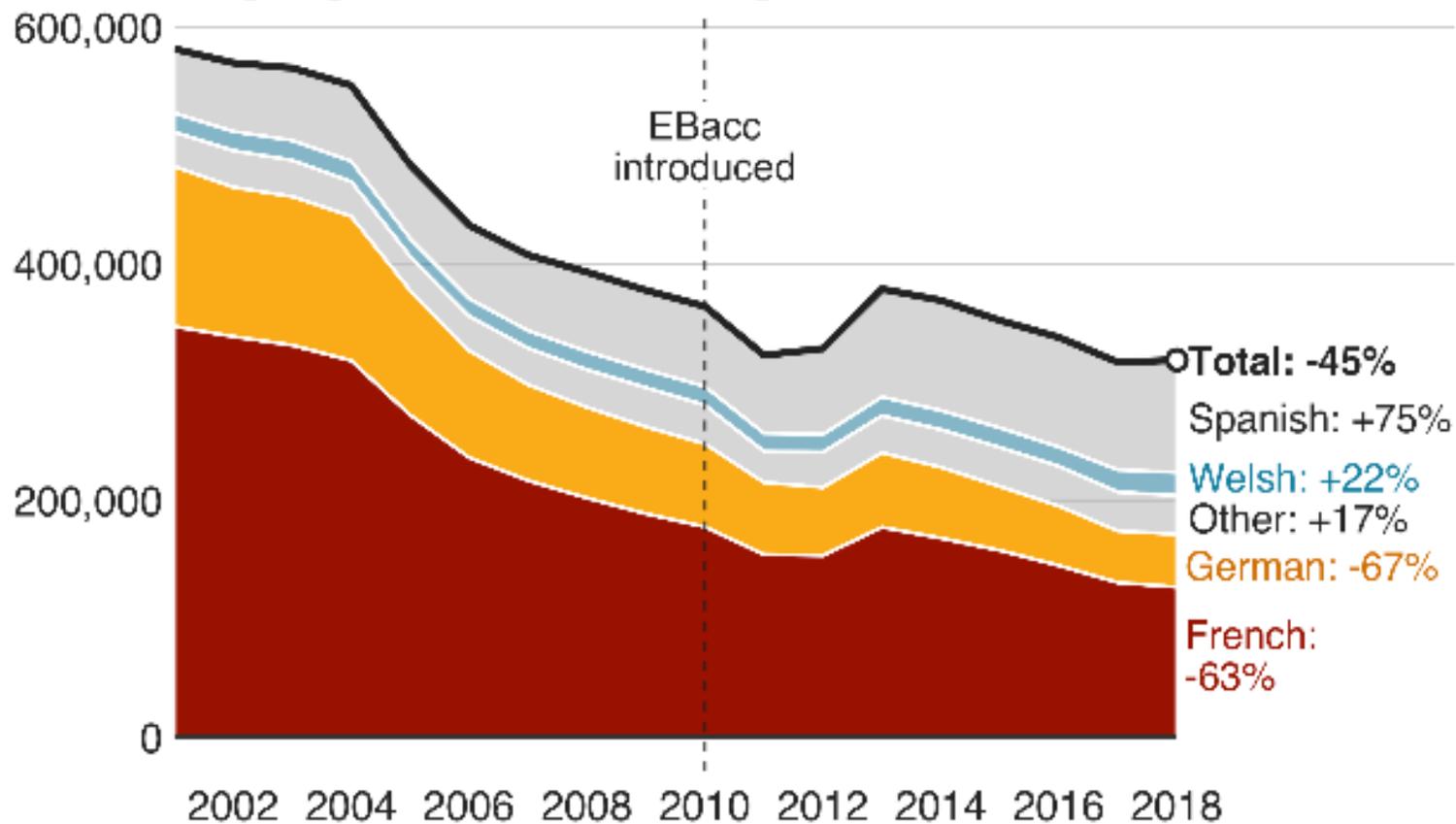
Work of
Teaching
Schools Council

Digital Pairing
scheme



GCSE languages dropping

GCSE language exams sat in England, Wales and N Ireland



Source: Joint Council for Qualifications

BBC



Pressures of School Accountability

Amanda Spielman

“Our intention is to place the curriculum back at the heart of inspection and to view performance measures more in the context of the quality of education”



Issues with Progress 8

- Progress 8 is statistically biased whenever a subset of the population is considered, such as
 - Gender
 - Ethnicity
 - Disadvantage
 - Special needs
- Schools with predominantly white British intakes tend to do less well against P8 as levels of disadvantage increase.
- Conversely, P8 increases with the proportion of EAL students for given levels of disadvantage.

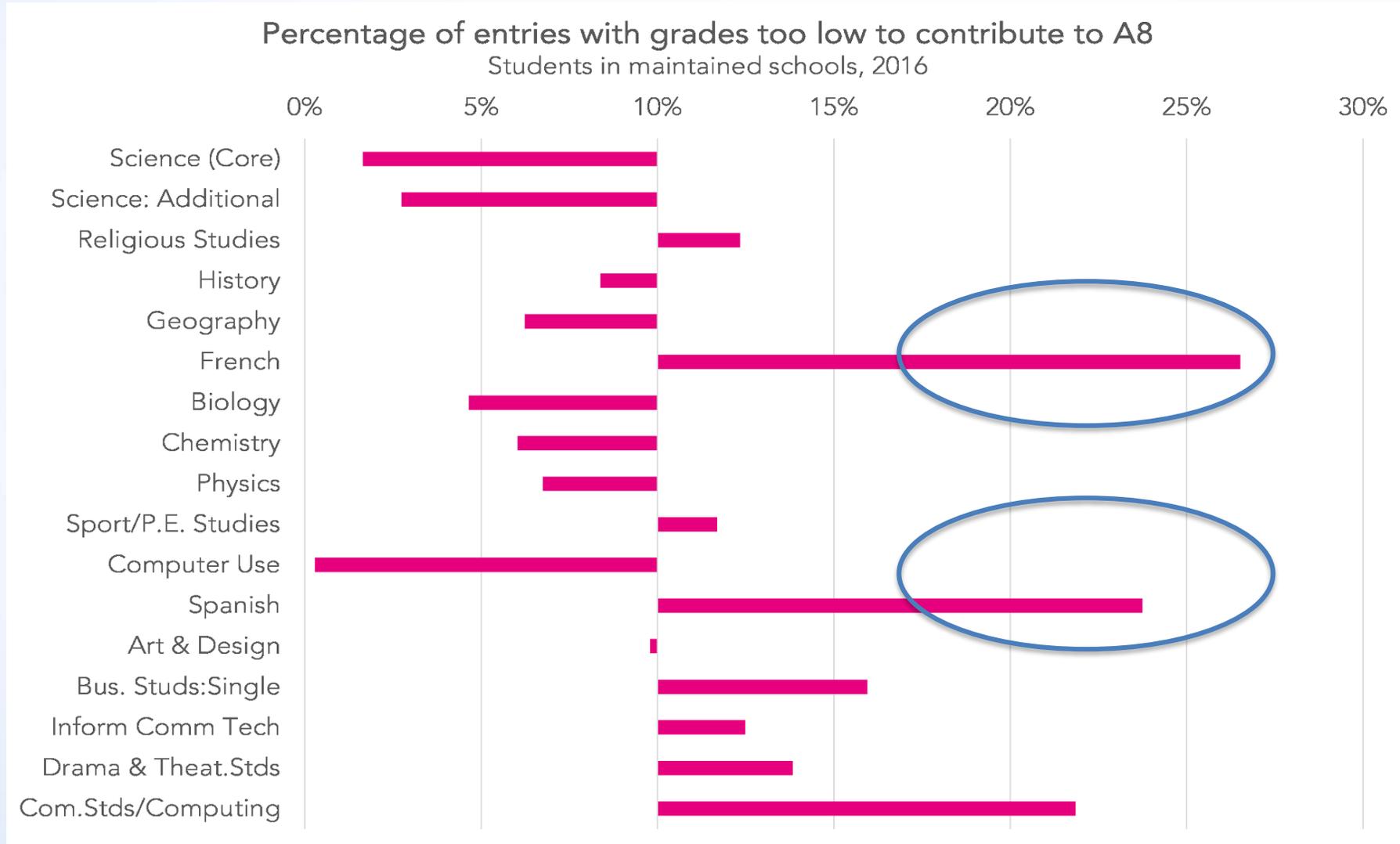


Other issues with Progress 8

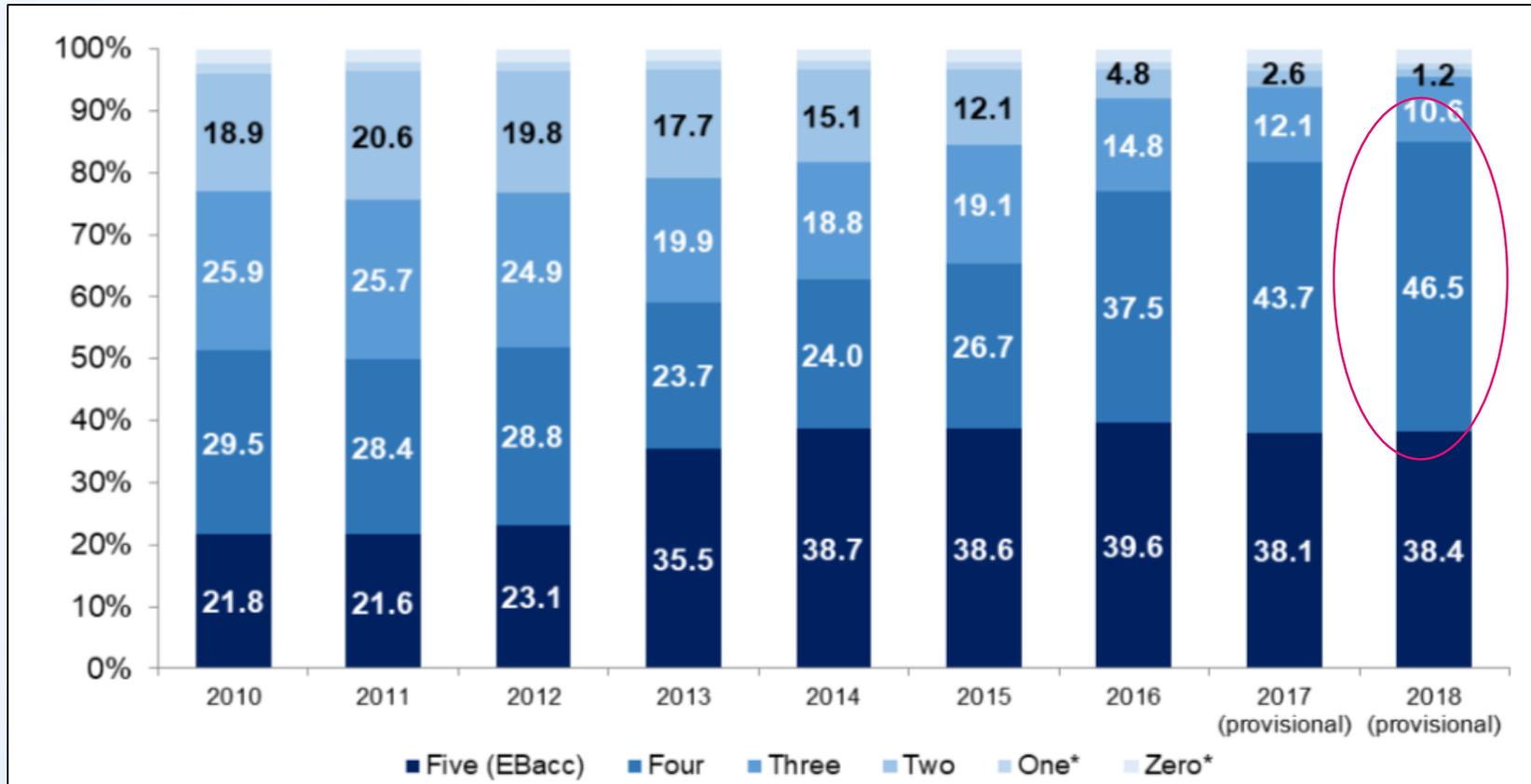
- It's published late, because all schools' results are needed to establish national average scores. This also makes P8 impossible to predict.
- It requires qualifications to be equally challenging at all grade levels.
- It's a factor in the decline of GCSE entries in modern foreign languages.
- The measure is distorted by pupils with very low, implausible scores
- It's reliant on KS2 input scores that are themselves high stakes outputs



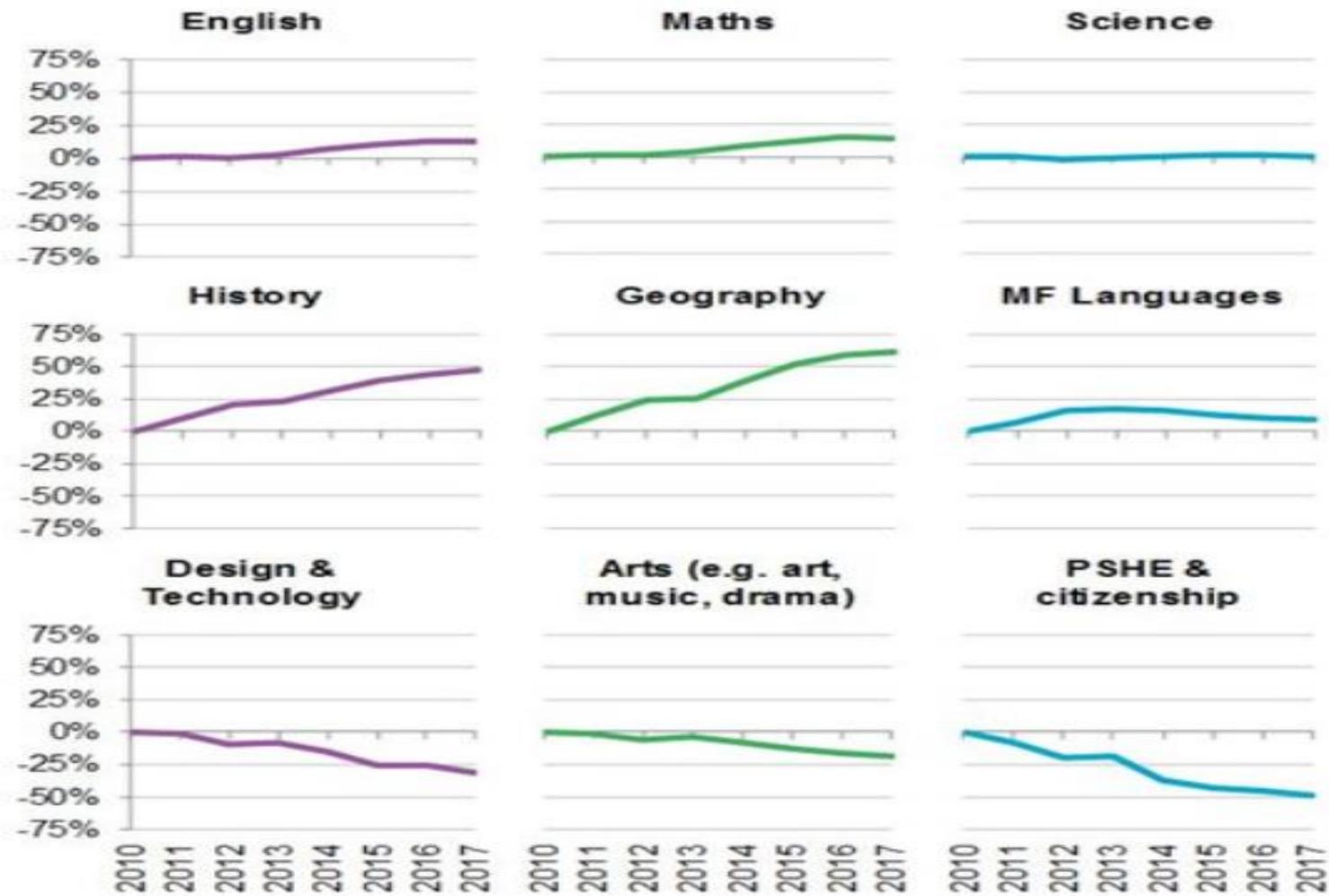
Entries to A8 in 2016



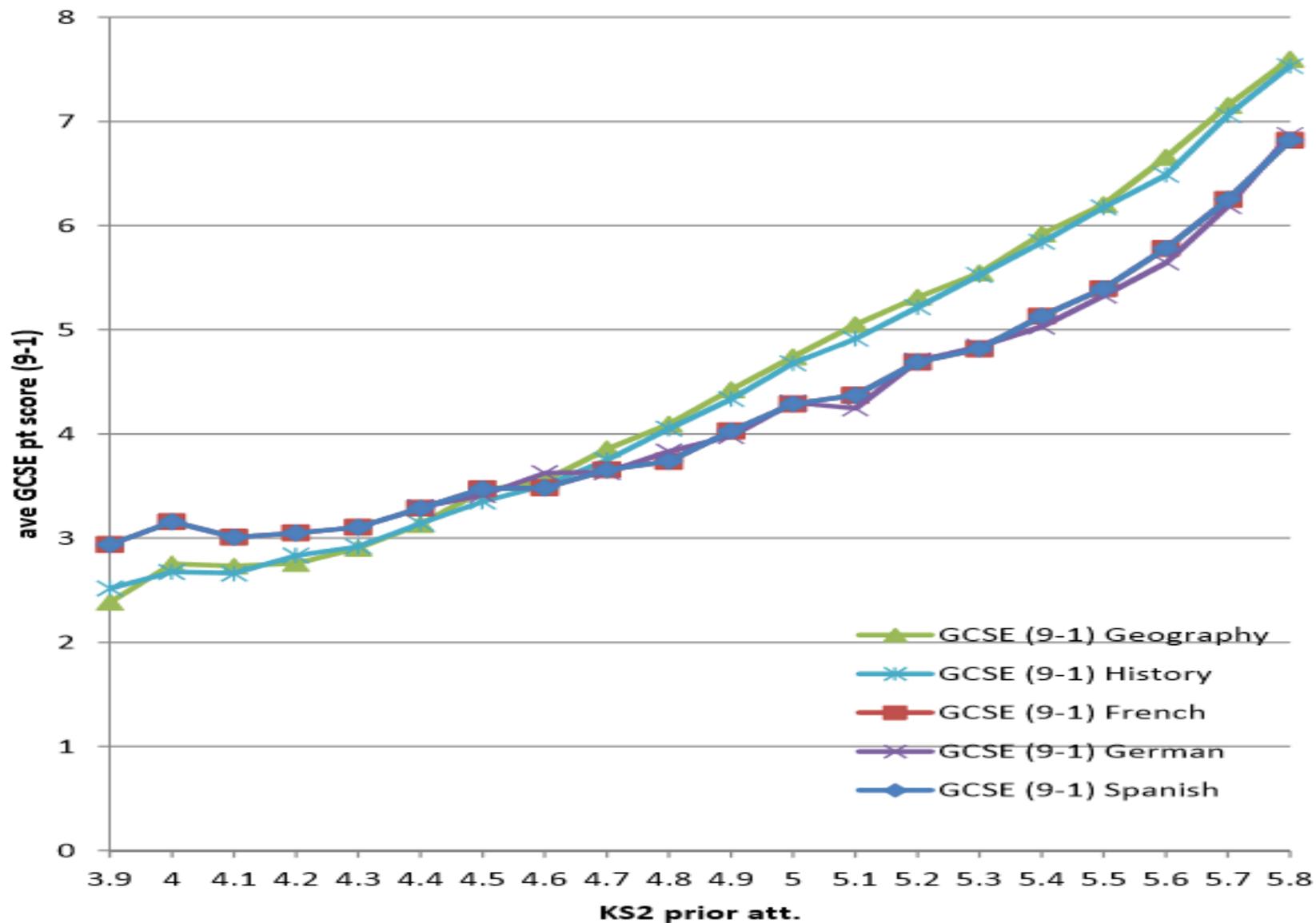
Percentage of pupils entering different Ebacc components



NFER – change in timetabled hours per pupil since 2010



GCSE Ave score by KS2 - Jun 18 (SMID estim)



Implications of this

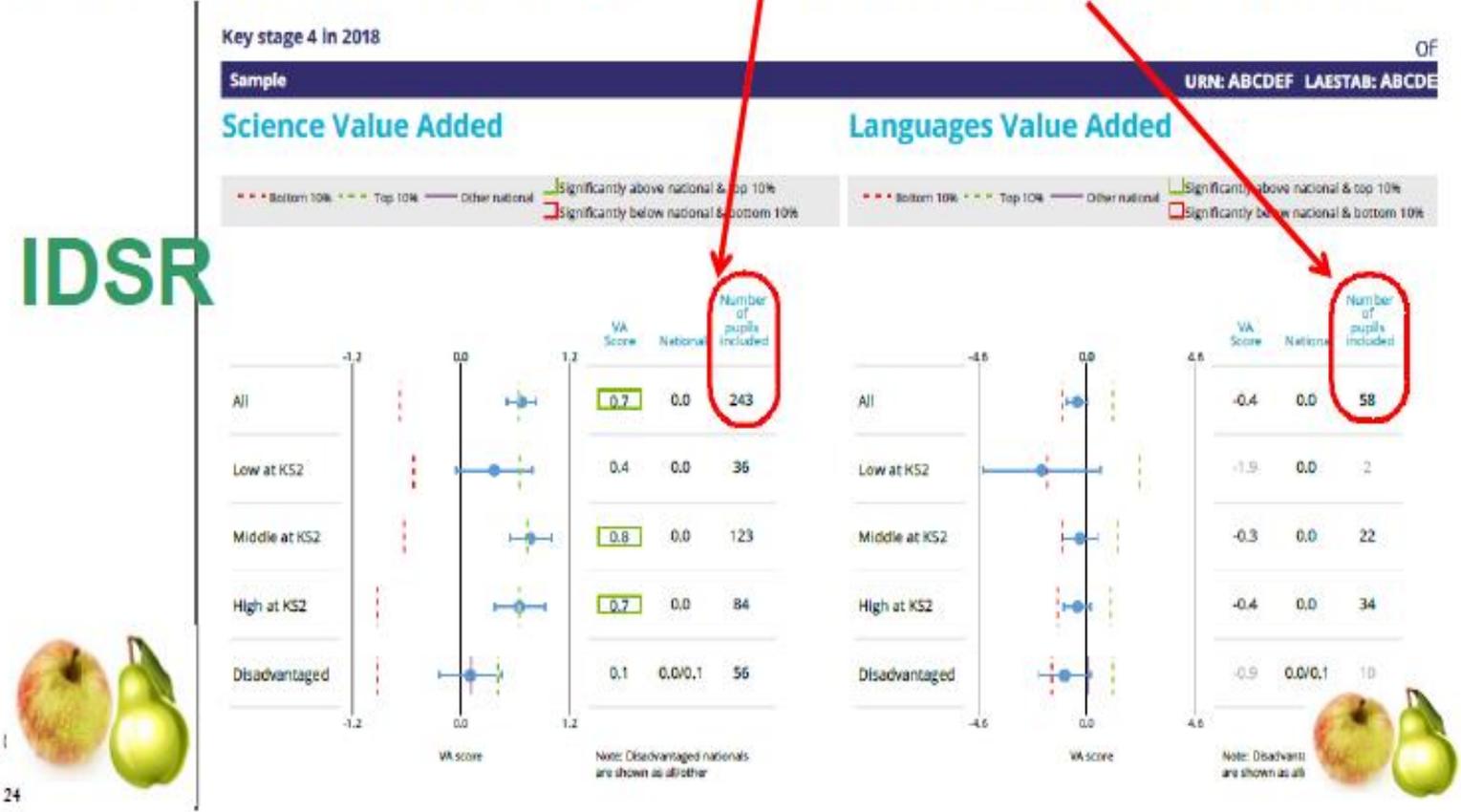
- There can be a disparity between a student's aspirational target grade and their realistic ability and tier entry decisions are particularly difficult if a student has a target grade of 6
- Target setting for pupils
- Tiering decisions - lack of understanding about grade 5 and that it is equivalent to part of the legacy grade B.
- Pupils' perceptions



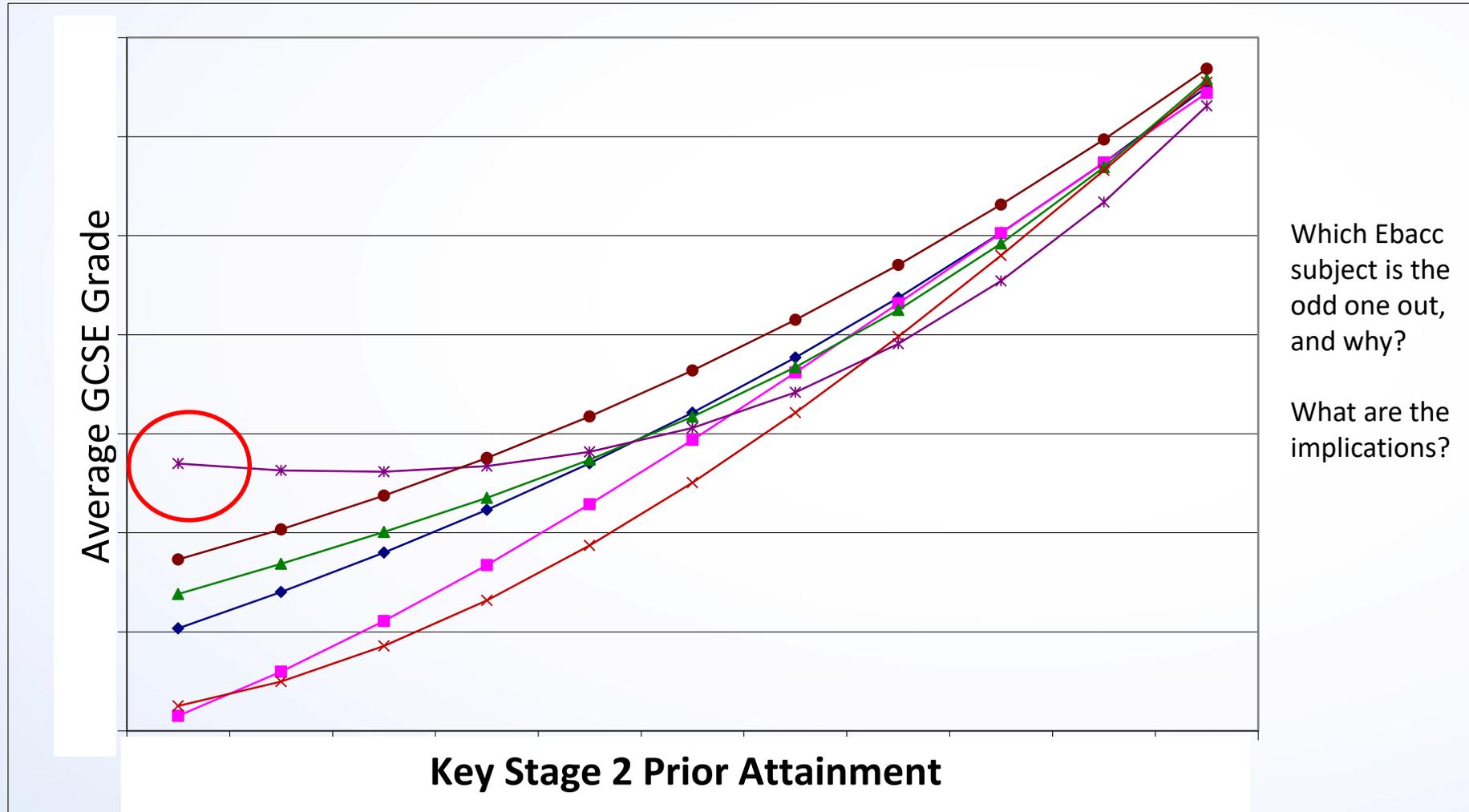
Comprehensive schools with high ML entry and high "English as first language" have **NEGATIVE** Lang VA, on average minus half a grade!



Page 10 – Sc and Lan VA both on same page – potentially misleading, because almost all pupils in all schools do Science now, whereas very variable for ML across schools



Ebacc value added v KS2 PA



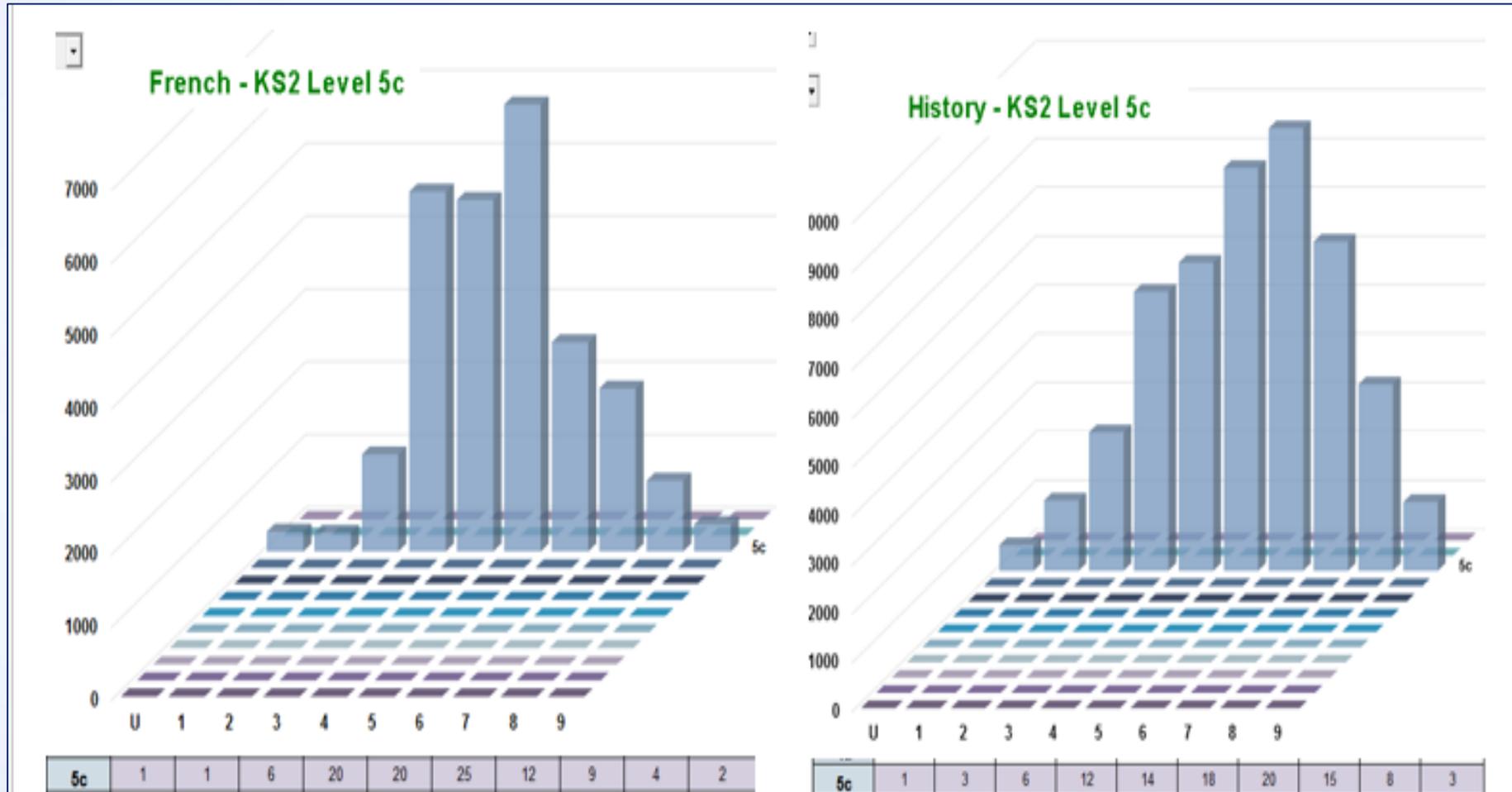
Which Ebacc subject is the odd one out, and why?

What are the implications?



National Transition Matrices

Courtesy David Blow



so many students getting a 6 or 7 in History (between 11th and 46th percentile) will get a 5 or in French (5 starts at 27th percentile)! $(27-46) / (11-46) \approx 54\%$. Mathematically a 6 in History (26th - 46th percentile) is virtually equivalent to a 5 in French (27th - 52nd percentile!!!)



What does this mean?

- From a pupil perspective for the quarter of the population, out of those with KS2 Level 5c (some 25,000 pupils), they will be seeing a grade lower in French than History and judging incorrectly that they are worse at French than History
- **Mathematically, a 6 in History (26th - 46th percentile) is virtually equivalent to a 5 in French (27th - 52nd percentile!!)**
- ASCL's lack of confidence in the fairness of the grading system



What is being done on severe grading?

- ASCL's **outline principle** is that typical students studying a mainstream GCSE ML should have a reasonable expectation that they will get similar grades across EBacc subjects, without any systematic variation.
- Ofqual's work on this - Is there a case to adjust the grading?
- Compare GCSE performance in 2018 with the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR)
- <https://ofqual.blog.gov.uk/2019/02/14/evaluating-new-gcses-in-french-german-and-spanish/>



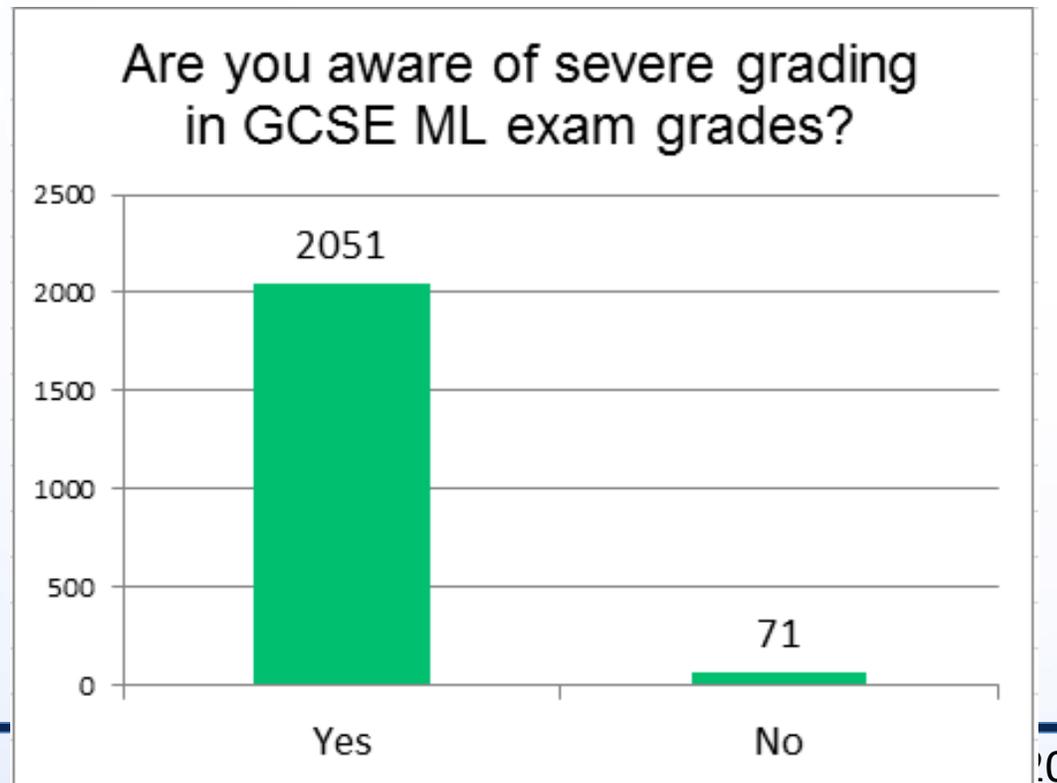
National Survey on ML grading

- **ASCL hosted survey re GCSE ML grading (open to non-ASCL members a), circulated via ALL, ISMLA, HMC etc**
- **Survey opened 5 pm Tues 7th November 2017**
- **By 5pm Friday 10th Nov there were over 2100 responses**



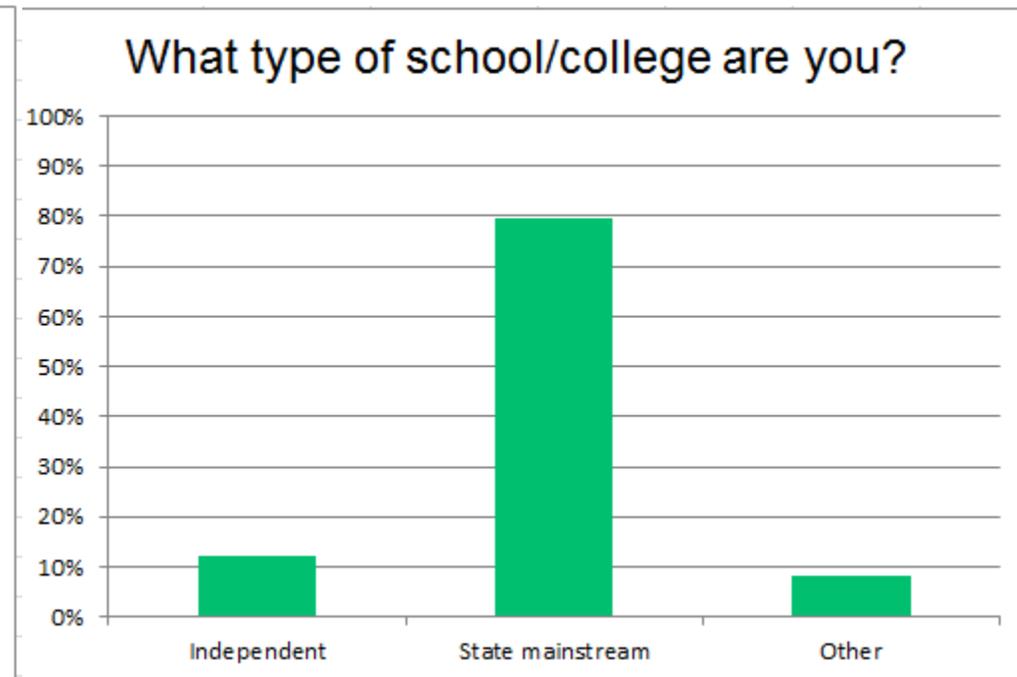
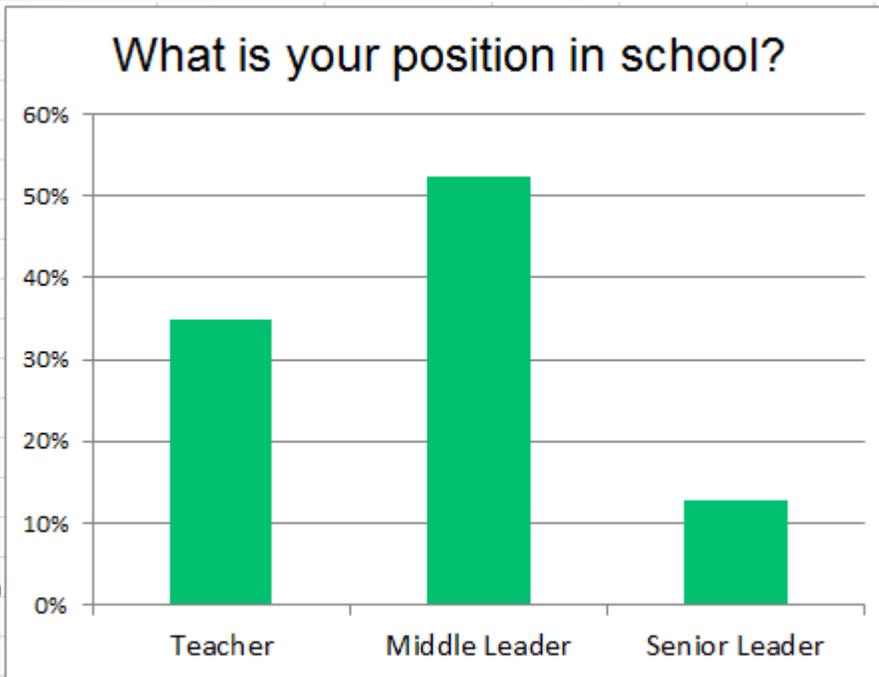
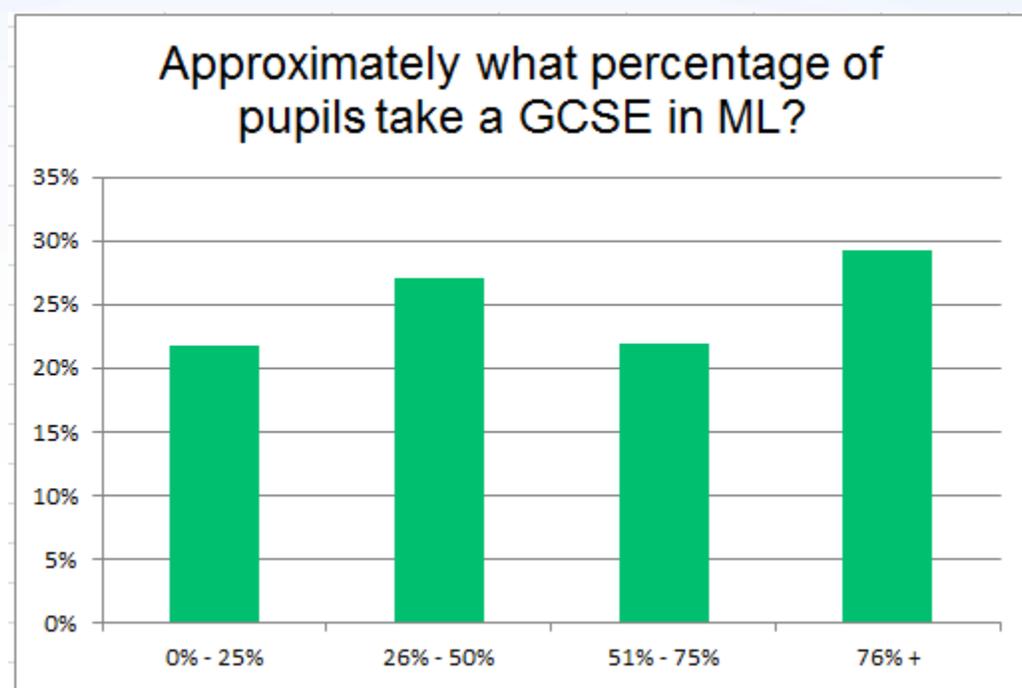
Awareness of severe grading

- Are you aware of severe grading in GCSE ML exam grades?
- Yes: 2,051 = 97%, No: 71 = 3%



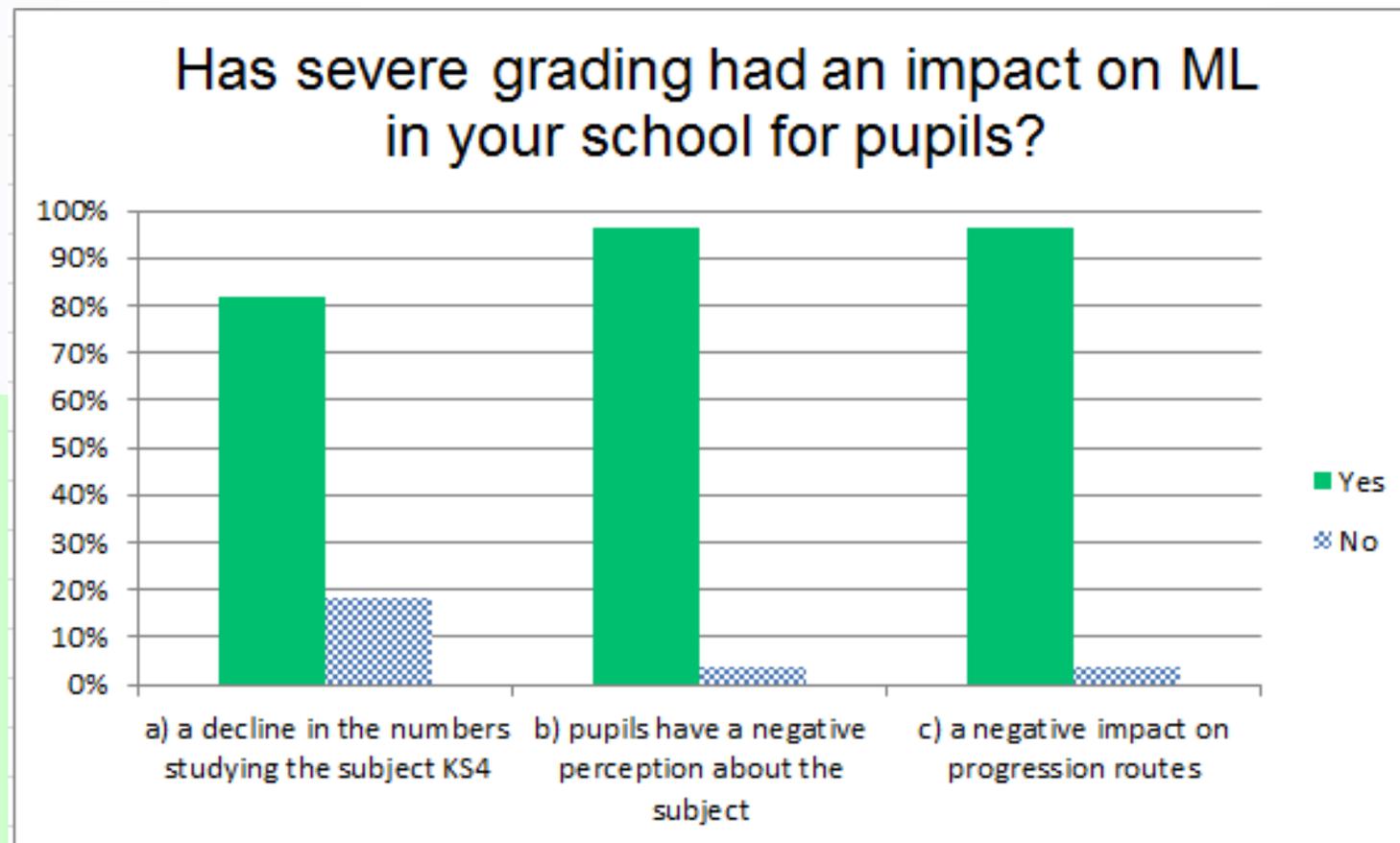
About respondents

So typical coverage (nationally about 50% of pupils take ML)



Impact on ML in your school for pupils?

Has severe grading had an impact on ML in your school for pupils?					
	Yes		No		Total
a) a decline in the numbers studying the subject KS4	82%	1683	18%	377	2060
b) pupils have a negative perception about the subject	96%	2020	4%	77	2097
c) a negative impact on progression routes	96%	2009	4%	74	2083

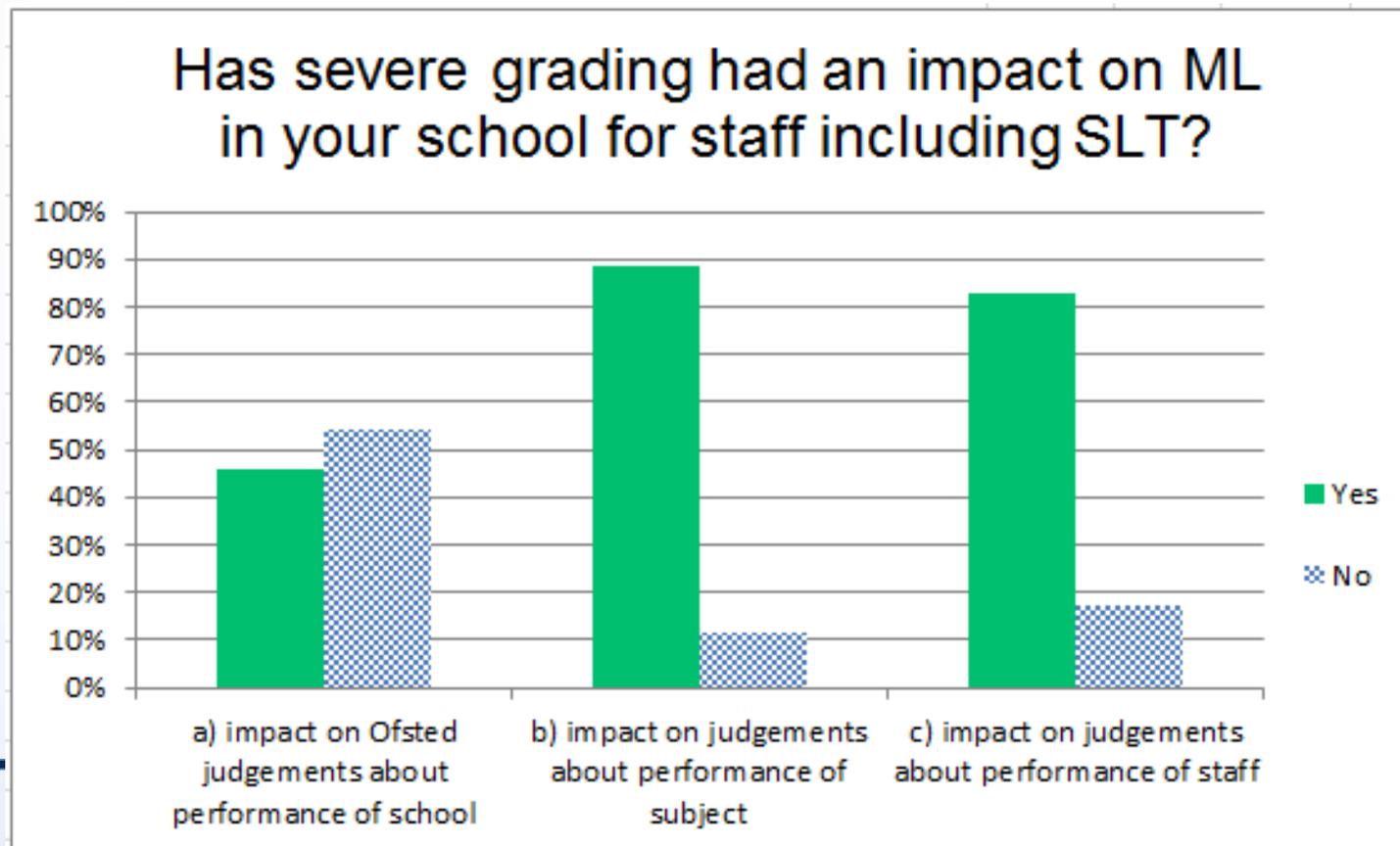


a) is slightly lower because some schools have maintained a policy of pupils doing a ML irrespective of the grading consequence



Impact on ML in your school for staff?

Has severe grading had an impact on ML in your school for staff including SLT?					
	Yes		No		Total
a) impact on Ofsted judgements about performance of school	46%	924	54%	1097	2021
b) impact on judgements about performance of subject	88%	1860	12%	242	2102
c) impact on judgements about performance of staff	83%	1727	17%	360	2087



Expect a) to be lower than b) and c) as most schools are “good”, and would take a substantial factor to move up or down, although there may be comments in report



Reformed GCSEs in MFL

What are we learning?



Feedback from teachers on reformed GCSE

- In GCSE MFL, the new speaking assessment are resulting in better linguists, although they do cause anxiety for some students. Students struggled with the listening assessments.
- In French, some would like mixed tiering between the different elements.
- Low grade boundaries meant students had an unreasonable expectation of their abilities. This has had a knock-on effect on how they are coping with A level.
- There is a big jump between GCSE and A level German
- Linear assessments are better for language development
- Content over 2 years



Ofqual advice on tiering

- Students predicted a grade 4 or 5 should generally be entered for foundation tier
- Only students with a **realistic** target of a grade 6 should be entered for higher tier
- Otherwise a student who has an 'off-day' could receive an ungraded result and miss out on a grade

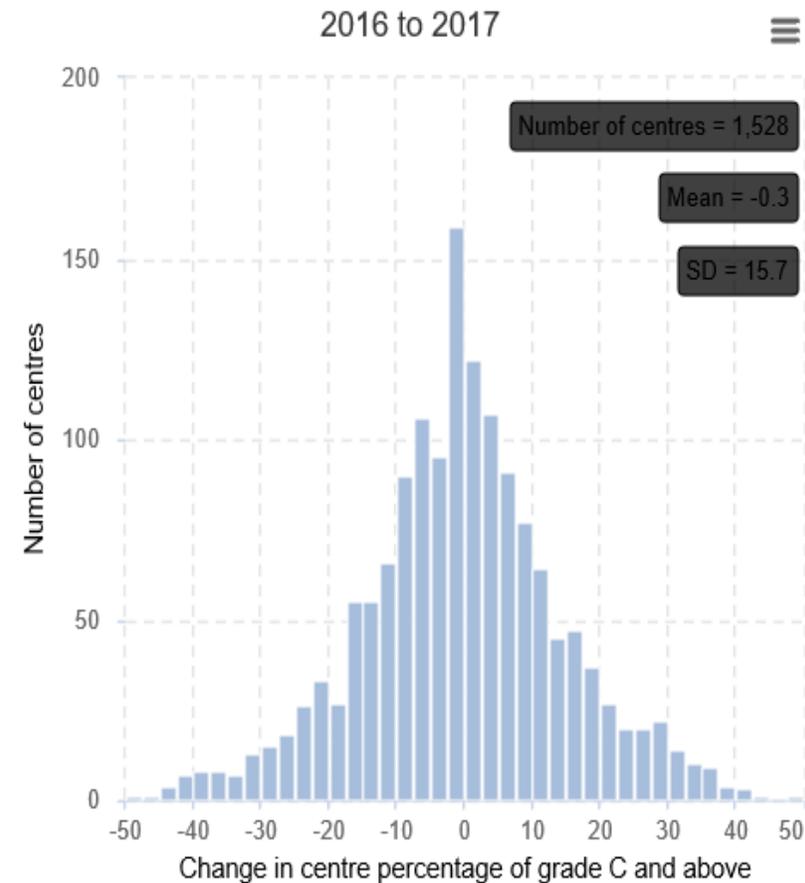
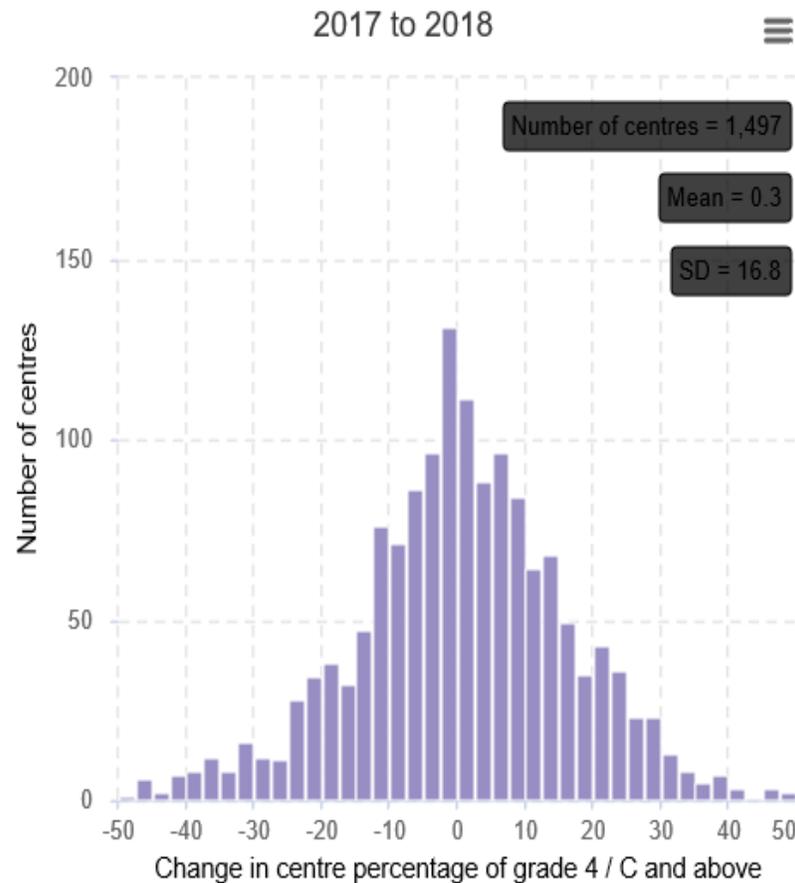
<https://ofqual.blog.gov.uk/2019/01/15/gcse-tiering-decisions>



Centre variability in GCSE French

2017-2018

Centre variability for all ages in GCSE French for grades 4 / C and above for all centres with 25+ students

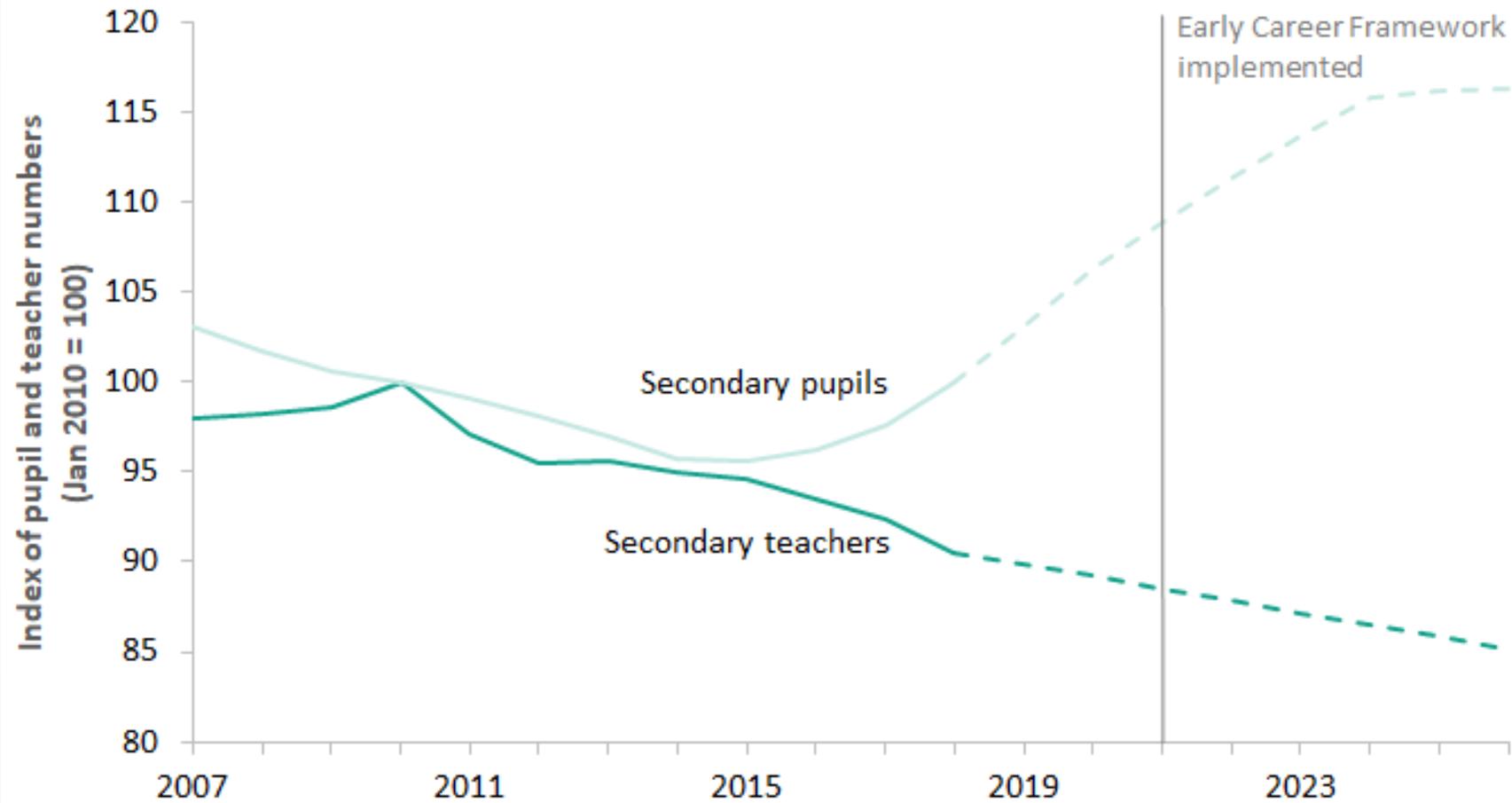


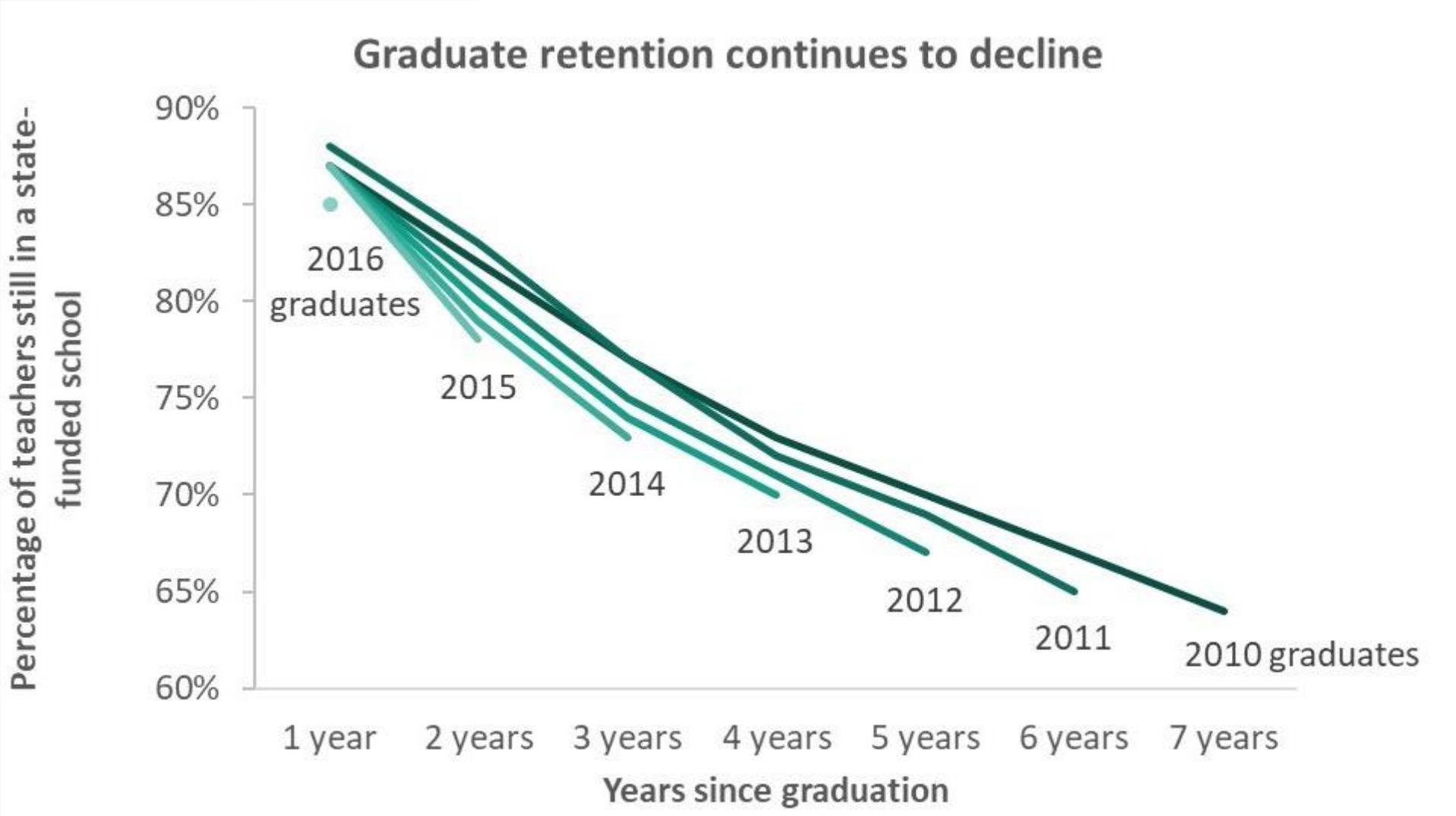
Teacher Recruitment & Retention

NFER data



Secondary pupil numbers will continue to rise in the coming years





What can be done to support MFL teachers?

- SLT to understand issues facing MFL :- MFL-literate
- Relax specific requirements for MFL teachers to have more than 1 language?
- Celebrating milestones?
- Heighten profile of MFL throughout school (senior leaders)
- Parental engagement – crucial 2-month time window in early Y7 to grab the parents and enhance profile of MFL in their eyes
- Presentation to governors on MFL – use ASCL stuff
- Plug into subject communities



Year 10 MFL course

Real Lives | CIOL (Chartered Institute of Linguists) | Service Lives. Service Lives is a real world multiple choice listening comprehension exam suitable for cadets, testing their language skills in adventure and leadership situations, linked to the services, in which emergencies require clear and accurate communication and understanding.

Wednesday 19 June 2019 | 40 Minutes long, multiple choice, L comp = minimum hassle to administer

Anyone in Yr 10 will pass if they are expected to get a '4' at GCSE a year later in Yr 11. Possibility for Y9

Cost is £18 per candidate (special rates may be available)

Last year 550+ sat the exam and only a very few did not pass | Offered in French / German / Spanish

2/3 did the D of E version and 1/3 the cadet version www.ciol.org.uk/real-lives

Medical Health - Certificate of Bilingual Skills - designed for bright medics in yr 12



Thorny issue of Transition

- Information provided on transfer variable
- Learners' attitudes and motivation affected negatively from shift from Primary pedagogy
- Build on the prior learning from Primary
- Cross-phase discussion on what would be useful, why you need it and what you are going to do with it
- ASCL's 'Discovering Language Project'

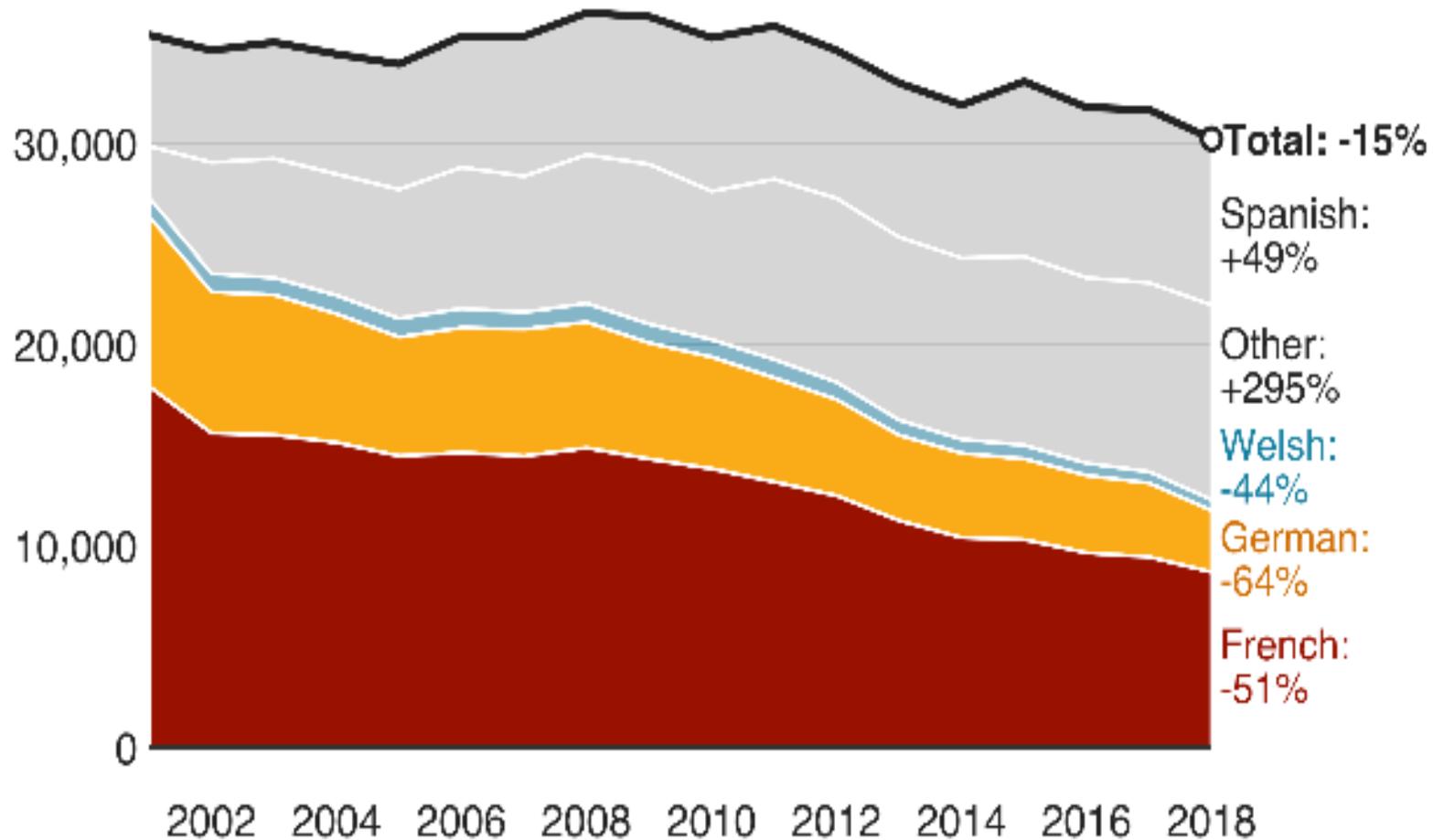


Post 16 Challenges



French and German falling most

A-level language exams sat in England, Wales and N Ireland



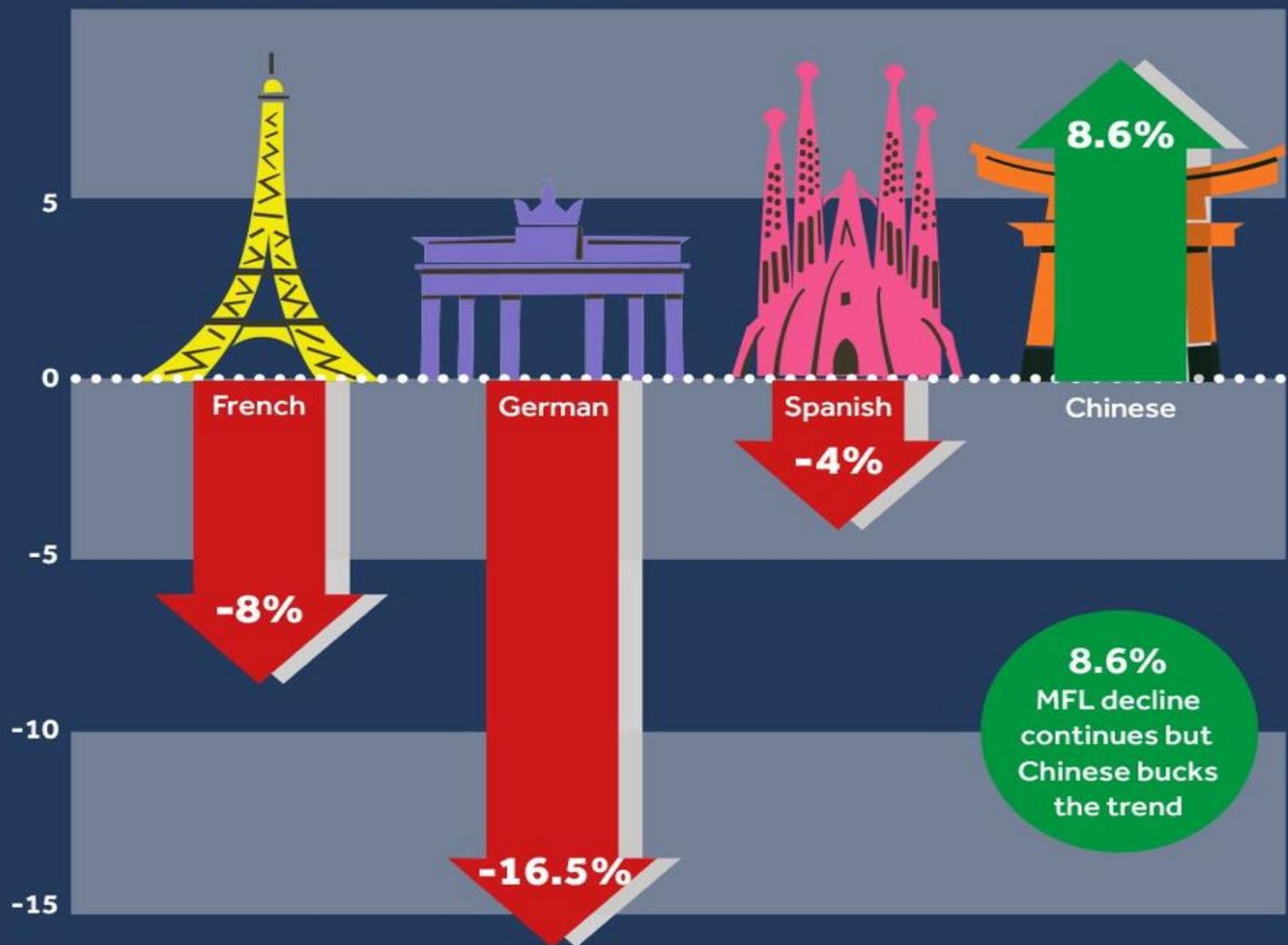
Source: Joint Council for Qualifications

BBC



The decline in languages

UK proportion of entries with A* grades



8.6%
MFL decline continues but Chinese bucks the trend



Impact on uptake Post 16

- Academic confidence with new numerical grading at GCSE
- Impact of reformed GCSE
- Viability of subject
- The very low number proceeding from GCSE to A level threatens the continued supply of teachers and professional linguists
- Post 16 enrichment





Your curriculum matters!

Those who are bold and ambitious for their pupils will be rewarded as a result

Amanda Spielman Wellington 2018



Amanda Spielman's comments

- 'This will require strong leadership & courage within senior teams to do what is in the best interest of children, even when it creates anxiety about league table goals'.
- 'What we want is a dialogue to understand your thinking and how you're making sure that the curriculum gives every child a full, deep, rich education.'
- Ofsted report Jan 2018 "a curriculum designed to fit with pupils' needs and aspirations regardless of performance measures"



The role of MFL in the curriculum

- Cultural capital - The extent to which schools are equipping pupils with the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life.
- Curriculum narrowing
- At the heart of an effective key stage 4 curriculum is a strong academic core: the EBacc.



How deep does your curriculum intent go?

- Vision for your subject – the most natural of all subjects/disciplines
- The importance of a carefully constructed progression model
- Encourage colleagues to really think about the curriculum they are designing – the sequencing of the content
- Not just subject knowledge or subject pedagogy but subject purpose



MFL Literate & Supportive School Leadership

Where does the future for MFL lie?



Steps leaders can take

- Embed activities that value community languages
- Recognise and reward language skills obtained outside school system and facilitate entry to public exams
- Become familiar with TSC's MFL pedagogy report
- Think about curriculum breadth post 16 (AS over 2 years?)
- Engage with work of national MFL hubs and the MFL Centre of Excellence
- Curriculum no longer viewed through the lens of accountability
- Recognise we need to shift away from a model that sees a few people as good at languages and most as bad , towards a spectrum of linguistic competence



10 reasons to learn a language

- Learning a language is more than preparing for a qualification, it is developing a specific skill which can augment career paths
- Recent studies show a positive correlation between second language learning and academic achievement (Steele et al. (2015))
- This research shows that learning a language with a different script has greater mathematical benefits, and learning a language with a similar script has greater literacy benefits.
- Learning a language gives us a keen awareness of our own skills as a learner, an understanding of how to develop a good memory
- Language learners develop the ability to communicate with self-awareness and confidence in the face of spontaneity



10 Reasons to learn a language

- Learning a language gives us significant transferable skills linked to other subjects as it reinforces our linguistic competence and the use of grammar and syntax
- Learning a language gives us explicit language knowledge and strategies to help us learn other languages in the future
- Learning a language supports our decoding skills and helps us be logical and analytical.
- Learning a language means we are spending time learning something challenging – we are developing our resilient brain
- Learning new languages leads to a measurable improvement in our attention capacity (Vega-Mendoza et al 2015, *Cognition*.)
- As we get older, the ability to speak another language leads to a better cognitive performance (s: Bak et al, 2014, *Annals of Neurology*.)



Reasons for Optimism

- All parliamentary Group launched a National Recovery Programme for MFL
- <https://nationalrecoverylanguages.weebly.com/>
- AHRC, ASCL, the British Academy, the British Council and Universities UK formed a Languages Advisory Group – due to publish National Strategy for MFL shortly
- Brexit – 20 reasons why learning a MFL is important
- <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/twenty-reasons-why-brexit-has-made-learning-foreign?sfns=mo>



ASCL support....more on its way

- Website in Curriculum Know Zone dedicated to MFL support & KS2 multilingual language awareness resources
- Keep school leaders up to date – all things MFL, Ofqual updates, Erasmus, British Council opportunities
- Support for National Languages Strategy
- Campaigning on severe grading at GCSE
- Guidance with British Council on homestay/exchange visits
- Leaflet for governors



Suzanne.ofarrell@ascl.org.uk
@ofarrellsuzanne

Learning languages doesn't just equip our young people with qualifications for the future, it broadens horizons, it deepens cultural understanding and it provides additional linguistic skills

'Monolingualism is the illiteracy of the 21st Century' (Robert, Leite & Wade 2018)

