Colleges and Modern Foreign Languages

30 January 2023

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Effective 16-18 provision

There are 4 dimensions to an effective local 16-18 system:

- **Sufficiency:** is the full range of provision available to young people within their travel to learn area?
- **Efficiency:** is the provision being offered at a reasonable unit cost? (eg: viable group sizes etc.)
- **Quality:** is the provision successful? (as judged by success rates, progression, inspection etc.)
- **Equality:** is the provision inclusive and accessible to all who might benefit?

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16-18 Languages education in England

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Languages 16-18

- There is a strong case for increasing young people's access to language learning at all levels. This has many economic, cultural and educational benefits.
- All 16-18 year olds in England should be able to access to a broad and flexible language offer.
- Language education in England is in decline and highly vulnerable; with low numbers, unviable group sizes and limited teacher supply.
- There are insufficient options for flexible, modular language learning including for students on technical and vocational programmes. The 'Asset' suite of units which did this is no longer available.
- Successful and sustainable language provision requires critical mass of students and skilled staff and some targeted funding to incentivise sufficiency and efficiency.

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A Level language entries 2007-2022

A Level language entries per thousand - England

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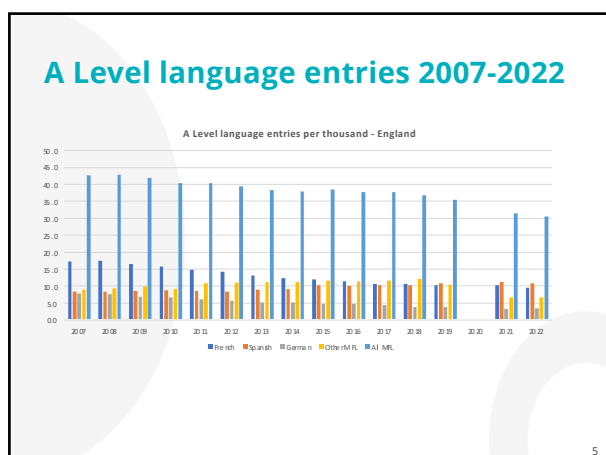
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A Level language group sizes 2021

Many A Level language groups are well below the threshold for viability and average group sizes are more than twice as high in colleges as in schools:

2021	schools	colleges
Number of AL Language entries	13,302	4,618
Average group size	3.8	10.1

(2021 Performance Table data – publicly funded provision)

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Languages 16-18

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Observations

- The fact that many FE colleges have no languages provision reflects student demand and the local pattern of provision.
- Languages are most likely to be offered in the largest A Level providers, and in many areas this will be a college. But some colleges do not have an A Level offer and there are limited language qualification alternatives to GCSE or A Level.
- The language 'cold spots' highlight the problem of safeguarding 'minority' subjects in a competitive market environment where there is no strategic area oversight or co-ordination of the curriculum offer.

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Recommendations

- We need a national strategy backed up by some investment and increased partnership at local, regional and national levels to establish and promote language provision post-16. One option would be to designate a language learning hub in every area – in many cases this could be a college.
- Given the patchiness and vulnerability of languages provision, we would welcome an area response and colleges as anchor institutions would be well placed to play a part in these.
- This type of approach could also improve access to visual and performing arts provision, which faces many of the same issues.

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Thank you

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