

Routes into Languages: Report on Teacher and Pupil Attitude Surveys

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Guide to Acronyms

DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfE	Department for Education
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
G & T	Gifted and Talented
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEFCW	Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
KS	Key Stage
MFL	Modern Foreign Languages
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PE	Physical Education

I Introduction

Routes into Languages is a government-funded project to increase motivation and participation in language learning (funded at the time of writing by HEFCE and the former DCSF, now the DfE in England and by HEFCW in Wales). It consists of nine regional consortia of universities in England and one national consortium in Wales working together to organise activities for language learners in schools and colleges in their local areas. Routes has also established national networks for translating and interpreting to raise the profile of careers in these fields and to increase the participation of English native speakers in postgraduate programmes of study.

This report presents the findings of questionnaire surveys conducted with teachers and students in schools which have participated in Routes into Languages activities organised by the regional consortia in England. It consists of the following:

- Analysis of 101 teacher questionnaires completed between March and May 2010;
- Analysis of 1791 Phase 1 pupil questionnaires completed between October 2008 and October 2009 in 54 schools;
- Case studies of 12 schools where students who had completed Phase 1 questionnaires were followed up with a Phase 2 survey completed between March and May 2010.

The questionnaires set out to elicit information on students' attitudes towards foreign language learning; on teachers' perceptions of students' attitudes and on the impact of Routes into Languages in order to inform the evaluation of the Routes programme in achieving its objectives although they do not form part of the evaluation. Questionnaires were devised by the central Routes team at the University of Southampton and were distributed by the nine regional consortia in England. The data collection process was conducted in accordance with the University of Southampton's ethical and data protection guidelines and under the guidance of the University's Research Governance Office.

All contributions from teachers and students are anonymised in the report while pseudonyms have been used for schools.

I.1 Scope of the report

The report focuses on teachers' perceptions of learners' motivation and of the impact of Routes activities on their students (teacher survey); learners' attitudes to language learning in general (Phase 1 pupil survey) and evidence of attitudinal change following engagement with Routes into Languages activities (Phase 2 case studies). Where appropriate, comments are made about gender and age differences in findings. However, it is not within the scope of the report to compare attitudes to different languages or to highlight any possible regional variations in motivation.

1.2 Cautions

Findings are presented with the following cautions:

- The teacher survey findings represent teachers' perceptions of students' motivation. This means that although inferences can be made about students' motivation, these are indirect as the information did not emanate from students themselves. In addition, the completed questionnaires are not necessarily representative of the views of all teachers whose students participated in Routes into Languages.
- The Phase I pupil questionnaire sample is biased towards girls and girls in single sex schools are over-represented. As language study is compulsory in Key Stage 3, we would normally expect approximately equal numbers of boys and girls to have taken part in the survey. Previous research has revealed that girls tend to be more positive about language study than boys and that they achieve better.¹
- We are not able to compare language learning motivation with motivation to learn other subjects.
- Some areas of England are disproportionately represented or under-represented in these surveys. For example, almost half of responses in the Phase I pupil survey came from South-East England (not including London).
- The sample represents an opportunity sample so the University of Southampton team have limited knowledge of the respondents and of the schools (other than that which is available in the public domain). This means that our interpretation of findings is necessarily tentative.

1.3 Research methodology

Both teacher and pupil questionnaires have been based on a previous large-scale motivation survey of learners in KS3 in England,² which was itself adapted from earlier research³ and from the Attitudes and Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) developed by Robert Gardner and associates in Canada.⁴ This is a quantitative instrument, which has been repeatedly empirically tested and refined.⁵ It consists of a series of Likert rating-scale statements and invites participants to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree on a four-point scale. As rating scales have been widely used in attitudes research before,⁶ this enables the Routes into Languages surveys to be situated in existing research literature.

¹ See for example: Clark & Trafford, 1996; Barton, 2001; Williams et al, 2002; Davies, 2004; Carr and Pauwels 2004, DfES, 2007.

² Coleman, Galaczi & Astruc, 2007

³ Purpura, 2001

⁴ e.g. Gardner, 1985

⁵ Gardner, 2001

⁶ Oppenheim, 2000; Dömyei, 2003

In their influential work on attitudes towards language learning, Gardner and colleagues⁷ distinguished between learners' integrative and instrumental motivational orientations. The integrative orientation involves a desire to identify and communicate with native speakers and an interest in target culture while the instrumental orientation associates language learning with useful extrinsic rewards (e.g. for jobs, exams, travel). This theoretical framework was subsequently expanded to include factors more relevant to the educational context and the survey devised by Coleman and associates (2007) covered four key components of motivation:

- Integrative motivational orientation (willingness to engage with the target community and interest in culture);
- Instrumental motivational orientation (acknowledgement of the usefulness of languages for jobs and travel, plans to study GCSE);
- Effort (effort made to learn languages and to make the most of opportunities to improve);
- Aptitude and achievement (perceptions of being good at languages and desire to do well).

The Routes into Languages questionnaires included these dimensions in line with Coleman and colleagues (2007) and have, therefore, followed an established approach to surveying attitudes and motivation although we do acknowledge that the exact conditions of Coleman's survey were not replicated. The Routes surveys also included rating scales which sought to elicit information on students' enjoyment and their perceptions of the difficulty of languages as these were considered to be potentially significant in the Routes into Languages context.

The rating scales contain quantitative data and results from the surveys are presented with descriptive statistics in percentages. For the purposes of analysis, indications of agreement/strong agreement and disagreement/strong disagreement have been combined. Statistical tests such as those carried out by Coleman, Galaczi and Astruc (2007) have also been conducted and results of these are not described here but are available on request as are copies of questionnaires.

Both teacher and pupil surveys also contained open-ended questions, which have produced qualitative data. Broad categories and themes were allowed to emerge from this data in the manner of grounded theory methodology.⁸ These themes were discussed, revised and then agreed by the central Routes team at the University of Southampton.

This report begins with findings of the teacher survey. These are followed by the Phase 1 pupil survey findings and the 12 Phase 2 case studies.

2 The teacher survey

⁷ e.g. Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 1985; 2001

⁸ Glaser & Strauss, 1967

2.1 Background to the teacher survey

The aim of the teachers' questionnaire survey was to gauge Key Stage 3 teachers' views on the impact of Routes into Languages activities on their students.

The questionnaire consisted of three sections as follows:

- Background questions relating to the engagement of participating schools in different Routes activities;
- A series of Likert rating scales where teachers indicated the extent of their agreement and disagreement;
- A final open question: What do you think is the impact of Routes into Languages activities on your students?

2.2 Characteristics of the sample

101 questionnaires were returned by teachers in 94 schools in eight of the nine English regions. The number of teachers is higher than the number of schools because in a few cases, the questionnaire was completed by two teachers in the same school. The highest numbers of questionnaires were returned by the North East, followed by the East, West Midlands, Yorkshire and the Humber and the South East regions. No questionnaires were received from the South West.

Teachers involved in the survey were most likely to be teachers of French, followed by Spanish and German. A small number of respondents reported teaching a range of other languages including Arabic, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Mandarin, Russian and Urdu. Mostly they taught across KS3 to pupils in years 7, 8 and 9. A small minority only taught one or two of the KS3 year groups.

2.3 Involvement in Routes into Languages activities

Teachers confirmed that their pupils had been involved in a wide range of different Routes into Languages activities. The most frequent of these were visits to universities, which were reported by more than half of participants. Other frequent activities included visits to schools from university students (i.e. student ambassadors) and staff, activities for gifted and talented students, languages and careers events and activities for the European Day of Languages.

Figure 1: Students' involvement in Routes into Languages activities (teacher survey)

Visits to universities	55	54.5%
Visits from university students	45	44.6%
Activities for Gifted and Talented pupils	40	39.6%
Languages and Careers activities	34	33.7%

Visits from university staff	34	33.7%
Activities for the European Day of Languages	32	31.7%
University taster days	25	24.8%
Languages and film activities	21	20.8%
Languages and sport activities	20	19.8%
Residential activities	14	13.9%

Individual teachers also reported involvement in other activities such as cultural days and festivals of language and culture.

There were considerable variations in the level of pupil engagement with Routes into Languages activities reported by respondents. According to teachers, the numbers of Routes activities in which students had been involved ranged from one to nine.

2.4 Responses to rating-scale statements

Rating-scale statements were designed to elicit teachers' perceptions of four main components of pupils' motivation following involvement with Routes into Languages (in line with the pupil survey and in line with Coleman, Galaczi & Astruc, 2007) as follows:

- Instrumental motivational orientation;
- Integrative motivational orientation;
- Effort;
- Achievement.

Responses to rating-scale statements were largely very positive. Teachers perceived that there had been improvements in students' attitudes in all four dimensions of motivation following involvement with Routes into Languages activities. Teachers were particularly supportive of the idea that students were more aware of the potential usefulness of languages for future careers than before, indicating an increase in the instrumental motivational orientation. There were also indications from teachers of greater enjoyment, effort, desire to do well and interest in culture among students. Teachers suggested that expressions of interest in studying languages at GCSE and talking about going to university had also increased although not everyone agreed with this.

Figure 2: Responses to rating scale statements (teacher survey)

Findings by question	Agree*	Disagree*
My students are more aware now that languages could be useful for future careers	92.1%	4%
My students think that languages are more important than before	85.2%	9.9%
My students are more aware that languages can be fun than before	81.2%	12.9%
My students are more interested in doing well at languages than before	81.2%	10.9%
My students have expressed more interest in studying a language at GCSE than before	70.3%	19.8%
My students are more interested in finding out about the countries where the language is spoken	69.3%	24.8%

*There were a few nil responses, which have not been recorded in Figure 2

These responses were correlated with reported levels of engagement with Routes into Languages activities (Figure 1). This showed that higher levels of involvement with Routes activities were associated with stronger agreement among teachers that students' motivation and interest had improved. This does not necessarily mean that there was a causal relationship between the amount of Routes engagement and perceptions of increased motivation as other variables could be implicated. However, the lowest levels of agreement that motivation was better than before were recorded by respondents who suggested that students had only participated in one Routes activity. Agreement that motivation had improved increased steadily with each additional Routes activity.

2.5 Responses to open questions: teachers' views on the impact of Routes into Languages

Teachers' opinions on the impact of Routes into Languages were elicited in an open-ended question: What do you think is the impact of Routes into Languages activities on your students? As this is qualitative information, themes were allowed to emerge from the data. Responses were considered by the Routes central team and then coded and categorised before being grouped into three broad themes.

Teachers' comments were mainly very favourable and indicated that they associated Routes into Languages activities with a wide range of benefits. The three over-arching themes identified by the Routes central team are as follows:

- Increased pupil motivation and uptake of languages;
- Improved teaching and learning;

- Raised the profile of languages.

Each of these themes will be dealt with in turn. Teachers also identified continuing barriers to the study of languages in their schools and made suggestions as to future activities that they would like to see.

2.5.1 Impact of Routes into Languages on student motivation

According to teachers, increased interest and motivation among students were by far the most significant impacts of Routes into Languages and they highlighted a variety of motivational benefits for students who had been involved in activities.

Firstly, teachers believed that students enjoyed Routes activities and were excited by opportunities to engage in language events outside the classroom.

“All the students really enjoyed the day and we feel it is important for students to learn about the value of languages from people outside school.”

“Certainly created a buzz for the students...”

Activities that were specifically identified as enjoyable included film projects, sport and active languages events, activities involving lesser taught languages, school visits from university staff and activities involving undergraduate student ambassadors.

“Pupils enjoyed learning different languages. Pupils enjoyed the language taster sessions and continue to talk about them and repeat what they learnt.”

“Students enjoyed the excitement of leaving the classroom and experiencing an adult learning environment.”

“Students really enjoyed China Day (we even received a letter from one of our student’s mums to say thank you for a great day).”

“Excellent. A group of my students have received superb training on how to make their own film in a foreign language.... They have enjoyed the process tremendously.”

“Generally very positive impact. Especially students from uni have been well-received.”

Student ambassadors were considered to be good role models for school pupils.

“The ambassadors are excellent role models for our pupils...”

The opportunities that Routes into Languages has provided in taking languages out of the classroom were mentioned repeatedly by teachers who proposed that this had helped to raise pupils’ awareness of the usefulness of languages in the workplace, in higher education and in the wider world. This would seem to corroborate data from the rating scales indicating that teachers perceived Routes into Languages activities to have been particularly successful in improving understanding of the wider applicability of languages.

"It has been very useful as it shows them that there is a relevance to language learning that is outside the classroom. The particular impact for my students has been meeting people from other countries and having the students be able to communicate with them in the foreign languages."

"Great opportunity through the Language Work Days to work with languages in a university environment and to experience a day in university going to lecture theatres, having lunch on campus etc. I think this can really help to make university 'real' to some young people."

"It is great for students to hear about languages from other people – they think it is just me who speaks another language! They see that languages are useful and worthwhile. They see that languages bring opportunities in your career and personal life."

"It has made them more aware of the importance of having knowledge of another language for their futures in the workplace within a global market."

"The activities have really given students a sense of the world around them and the value of languages. It has been an excellent opportunity."

It was also suggested that Routes into Languages activities had encouraged learners to reflect on their own lives and futures and could help to raise aspirations, including among disadvantaged learners, which is a key objective of the Routes programme.

"Meeting people from outside school who work with languages was very beneficial, the pupils would never normally come into contact with them. Especially interesting to the pupils was meeting two foreign students who came with [name of university] staff and finding out from them what it's like to study languages and spend time in another country. This may encourage some to travel, work or live abroad who would never have considered it."

"Students have been encouraged to look to the future and aim higher. They are seeing the relevance to their own lives and the advantages of knowing languages for their future careers and enjoyment of other cultures."

"I think it provides a means for students of less privileged backgrounds to explore university life."

Several teachers observed that positive messages about languages carried far more weight when they were made by people other than teachers (e.g. employers, university staff and university students). University students were associated with the additional advantage of being young.

"The fact that an outside agent younger than me is saying the same things has helped a lot."

A few teachers also felt that engagement with Routes had increased pupils' interest in culture.

"The cultural days have helped them to become more interested in certain aspects of language learning."

"They enjoyed completing research about other countries and found some really interesting facts and figures."

Sixteen teachers specifically stated that the impact of Routes into Languages had been to increase GCSE uptake in their schools.

"Increased uptake at GCSE for 2010. More aware of lesser taught languages. Generally have a much more positive view of what university can offer."

"A very positive effect. Some students who were not thinking of taking a language at KS4 have now chosen one."

"More than twice as many students opted for languages in current year 9 (target group) than last year."

"Our GCSE uptake is up this year, one of the reasons for which is our emphasis on Active Languages."

In a few cases teachers suggested that although pupils had enjoyed Routes into Languages activities, this had not translated into increased uptake. This seemed to be partly because Routes events had only targeted small numbers of students in their schools.

"Very positive impact for approx 15 children. Routes has had little impact on the rest."

There were also several comments from teachers in those particular schools who stated that their students were already very motivated, which meant that the impact of Routes had been to consolidate existing interest.

"Sorry for being negative but our students are generally quite motivated. Your activities are keeping them motivated."

"It has helped confirm the relevance of studying a language for those who were already interested."

2.5.2 Impact of Routes into Languages on teaching and learning

Engagement with Routes activities was perceived to have had a good influence mainly on learning but also on teaching in schools in a variety of ways.

Firstly, the programme was said to have broadened the range of languages on offer by providing students with opportunities to learn languages which are not available in their schools. In some instances, this was said to be influencing students' future choices:

"For our students the impact of the [name of university] programme has been to give them the opportunity to study Italian and Mandarin. They have all enjoyed these languages and some are now considering future decisions (about university and careers) that involve these languages."

"Routes has given pupils the chance to learn.... languages, which they could not have studied in the main curriculum. Due to lack of time, money and staffing we could not have offered the pupils..."

Routes activities were also said to have enabled students to use and develop their language skills outside the classroom and to communicate in the foreign language with native speakers. Some teachers additionally reported that this was resulting in improved levels of confidence.

"I think this activity really boosted my students' confidence as it gave them the opportunity to practise their skills outside the classroom, which does not happen often enough."

"Students have been introduced to languages in new settings (in connection with sports). Their organisation and communication skills improved and they are more confident in class as a result."

Activities such as film and sport projects were additionally said to have encouraged students to work independently and creatively, which was regarded as particularly important for boys.

"The Routes into languages [name of region] film competition had a very positive effect on a particular group of hard to reach pupils. Mainly boys, in the upper ability range, who were not doing well in languages, were frustrated by the dependence on the teacher, like hard facts and hands on, prefer to work independently.... They were motivated and drawn in by the film, the media studies approach, the university links, the competition.....The Routes into Languages Challenge has had a very positive effect."

"We have done the film project with a group of year 9'sThe pupils seem very enthusiastic in lessons and have enjoyed working independently, which doesn't happen often in language lessons."

Teachers also proposed that generic and transferable skills were being fostered among students who participated in Routes activities. These included personal organisation, communication and ICT skills.

There was evidence from a small number of teachers of an impact on teaching both because Routes activities were being embedded in the curriculum in their schools and because they were involved in cascading activities to other schools in their locality.

"I have been able to cascade the film-making process to other teachers in our school and the county and we will aim to continue to incorporate it in our teaching within the department here."

"From a teacher's point of view, we have been working very closely with the PE department following the Active Language training day and have set up Mini Olympics where students win medals from a sporting point of view and also for speaking another language. The project is very successful and both students and staff thoroughly enjoy it."

"We have 50 pupils in Y7, 8 and 9 who volunteered for the language challenge and about 20 pupils in year 10 who are acting as mentors. We would like to look into spreading this to other schools as a next step."

2.5.3 Impact of Routes into Languages on raising the profile of languages

Teachers' also proposed that Routes activities had raised the profile of languages within schools and with students and parents, which helped to support them in their own efforts to promote languages.

"These activities bring languages to the forefront and put them on the map in the eyes of both pupils and parents."

"Activities undertaken raised the profile of languages and gave it kudos."

This would seem to be particularly important given observations by some teachers about structural barriers to language study in their schools, which are highlighted in the next section.

2.5.4 Continuing problems and issues raised by teachers

Some teachers pointed to continuing barriers adversely affecting the study of languages in their schools. It was suggested that students regard languages as difficult and think that they require more effort than other curriculum subjects.

"They think it is still too demanding and more difficult than other options"

"Pupils choose subjects which require the least amount of effort."

Other teachers also remarked on the organisation of schools and of the curriculum, which resulted in significant competition between subjects at options time and which they felt militated against languages.

"Too much competition with other subjects and they can basically only choose two or three."

Two respondents explained that there were middle schools in their area and that by the time that pupils arrived at secondary school in year 8, they were already de-motivated.

There was also one reference to the difficulties involved in persuading parents of the value of languages.

"Convincing parents that learning a European language is a genuine asset is not easy."

One teacher proposed that the state of MFL often depended on a school's priorities and for this reason thought that it was particularly important for outsiders to go into schools to highlight the significance of languages. Visits to schools have been a key feature of the Routes into Languages programme.

2.5.5 Teachers' suggestions for the future

Teachers also emphasised the importance for their students of continued involvement with Routes into Languages activities. The following suggestions for possible future activities were made:

- Regular involvement with Routes for year 9 students;
- More activities and help for less able pupils who can lack motivation;
- Continued school visits from student ambassadors;

- More focus on Routes activities with year 11;
- Development of projects that involve collaboration between languages and science subjects;
- Activities that help to support and track students (especially G & T) in KS3 and into and through KS4.

The final word on the impact of Routes into Languages rests with a teacher.

"I would like to say a big thank you for all these initiatives as for once languages are getting some attention."

2.5.6 Summary of issues in teacher questionnaire

Quantitative and qualitative information provided by teachers was overwhelmingly positive and indicates that Routes into Languages activities are highly valued by schools which participate in them. Many of the comments made by teachers about pupils' motivation are backed up by research evidence. For example, boys' preferences for working independently, which were highlighted here in praise for Routes film projects, are well-documented.⁹ Of particular note also are teachers' suggestions that the impact of Routes has not been limited to improving motivation but that it has also provided additional language learning opportunities, which pupils do not usually get in classrooms. Indications of increased student confidence as a result of participation in Routes activities are especially encouraging because lack of confidence has been identified as a significant factor in loss of enthusiasm and in giving up on languages.¹⁰ These findings, therefore, offer tentative hope that Routes may have begun to have some initial successes in addressing several of the very complex difficulties faced by language teachers.

However, some teachers were less optimistic because of the perceived issues and constraints in the curriculum in their schools. These teachers' views are corroborated by findings from the Language Trends Survey¹¹ and from a report into the impact of the KS3 Framework for MFL,¹² which also examined strategies used in schools to encourage uptake at KS4. The authors found that the options system was regarded as limited in some schools and that several head teachers admitted that curriculum space was 'squeezed' at KS4.¹³ This was also echoed by pupils in the research who said that timetabling issues made it difficult for them to opt for a language.

It is more difficult for Routes into Languages to have an impact on curriculum structures within schools. These findings suggest that there may be a need to target some activities more directly at senior leaders in schools.

3 Phase 1 pupil survey

⁹ e.g. Harris 2002, Carr & Pauwels, 2006

¹⁰ McPake et al, 1999; Fisher, 2001; Graham, 2002; OFSTED, 2008

¹¹ CILT/ALL/ISMLA, 2009

¹² Evans & Fisher, 2009

¹³ Evans & Fisher, 2009: 92

3.1 Background to the pupil survey

The aim of the Phase I pupil questionnaire was to obtain information on learners' attitudes to foreign languages. It consisted of three main sections:

- Background questions on gender, year group, postcode, languages learnt at school and languages spoken outside school;
- A series of Likert rating scales designed to elicit data on four key components of motivation in line with Coleman, Galaczi and Astruc (2007) and in line with the teacher survey. These were instrumental motivational orientation, integrative motivational orientation, effort and achievement.
- A series of open questions:
 - What is your favourite subject?
 - Do you want to go to university when you leave school?
 - What job would you like to have when you leave school?

3.2 Characteristics of sample

3.2.1 Sample size

The survey sampled a total of 1791 learners (746 boys and 1045 girls) in Key Stage 3 (Year 7-9) from 54 schools. A small number of students in years 10 and 11 completed questionnaires but these were discarded from the sample.

3.2.2 Geographical spread: Questionnaires returned by each regional consortium

All regions in England returned questionnaires. However, a disproportionately high number of responses came from the South East while relatively few came from the East, East Midlands and the South West. It is recognised by the authors that this could have implications for findings because uptake of languages beyond KS3 has been shown to be generally higher in the South East region (and in London) than in other English regions in Language Trends surveys.¹⁴ This could indicate higher levels of motivation among KS3 learners in the South East.

Figure 3: Regional distribution of respondents (Phase I pupil survey)

	No. of questionnaires returned	Percentage of overall sample
East	26	1.5%
East Midlands	5	0.3%
London	216	12.1%

¹⁴ e.g. CILT/ALL/ISMLA, 2009

North East	190	10.6%
North West	247	13.8%
South East	839	46.8%
South West	28	1.6%
West Midlands	156	8.7 %
Yorkshire and the Humber	84	4.7 %

3.2.3 Languages studied

French was overwhelmingly the most common language being studied by questionnaire respondents and was followed in frequency by Spanish and German. Small numbers of pupils were learning other languages.

Figure 4: Languages studied (Phase I pupil survey)

Language	Number of students studying	Percentage of students studying
French	1412	79.0%
Spanish	704	39.4%
German	559	31.3%
Italian	74	4.1%
Chinese	31	1.7%
Other	63	3.5%

3.2.4 School achievement

The respondents attended a total of 54 schools. We obtained information on school attainment from the 2009 attainment tables which were still available at the time of writing on the website of the former Department for Children, Schools and Families (<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/performance/tables/> - accessed 28 June 2010). The schools represented in our sample had 54.7% of pupils achieving a level 2 threshold in five GCSE A* to C grades including both English and Maths GCSEs in 2009, which is slightly above the national average of 52.5%. The proportion of schools with pupils attaining an A* to C grade in a full MFL GCSE was 37.1%, which was very slightly above the national average of 36.9%. One fifth of the schools in the survey had very low attainment in comparison with attainment nationally. Therefore we can be reasonably sure that the schools in the Routes survey are fairly representative of the English secondary school system as a whole.

3.2.5 Socio-economic background of the students

Pupils were asked to provide their home postcodes so that their socio-economic backgrounds could be identified using ACORN classifications.¹⁵ ACORN breaks neighbourhoods into different types based on a number of factors including income, educational attainment and employment situation. By using the ACORN categories we were able to make a much better judgement about the socio-economic background of the children who responded to the questionnaire than we could by only looking at the achievement and 'profile' of the school attended by respondents. Analysis of postcodes shows that our sample is broadly similar to that of the UK population as a whole. This is important because of the close relationship between social class and uptake in languages.¹⁶

Figure 5: Acorn categories in Routes sample and in the general population

Acorn categories (2006 data)	Frequency	Percent in Routes sample	Percent in general population
Wealthy Achievers	403	27.3	25.4
Urban Prosperity	168	11.4	11.5
Comfortably Off	425	28.8	27.4
Moderate Means	201	13.6	13.8
Hard-Pressed	280	19.0	21.2
Total	1477 (missing – 314)		

3.2.6 Languages other than English spoken outside school

Over 80 languages other than English were reported to be spoken outside school by respondents. Languages with at least 10 speakers can be seen in Figure 6:

Figure 6: Languages spoken outside school (Phase 1 pupil survey)

French	81
Spanish	54
Italian	43
Urdu	39
Arabic	36
Chinese	
• Type not specified (18)	
• Mandarin (10)	35
• Cantonese (7)	
Bengali	33
German	22

¹⁵ For further details about ACORN see <http://www.caci.co.uk/acorn-classification.aspx>

¹⁶ Dearing & King, 2007

Turkish	20
Somali	18
Punjabi	17
Japanese	16
Polish	10
Portuguese	10

289 (16%) of the 1791 participants indicated that they spoke a language other than English with family or close friends/relatives and 72 said that they did so in after school clubs.

3.3 Pupil interests and aspirations (open questions)

3.3.1 Aspirations

Pupils were asked what job they would like to do when they left school and they came up with a huge range of suggestions. Overall aspirations were strongly biased towards skilled, professional and managerial occupations with medical practitioners, sports players, actors, teachers, lawyers and police officers the most popular choices of careers. 1245 pupils (69.5%) said they wanted to go to university, only 31 (1.7%) said they did not and 400 (22.3%) said that they did not know. Although this figure seems quite high, it is consistent with a recent report from the University of Westminster, which indicated that 75% of eleven-year-olds wished to attend university.¹⁷

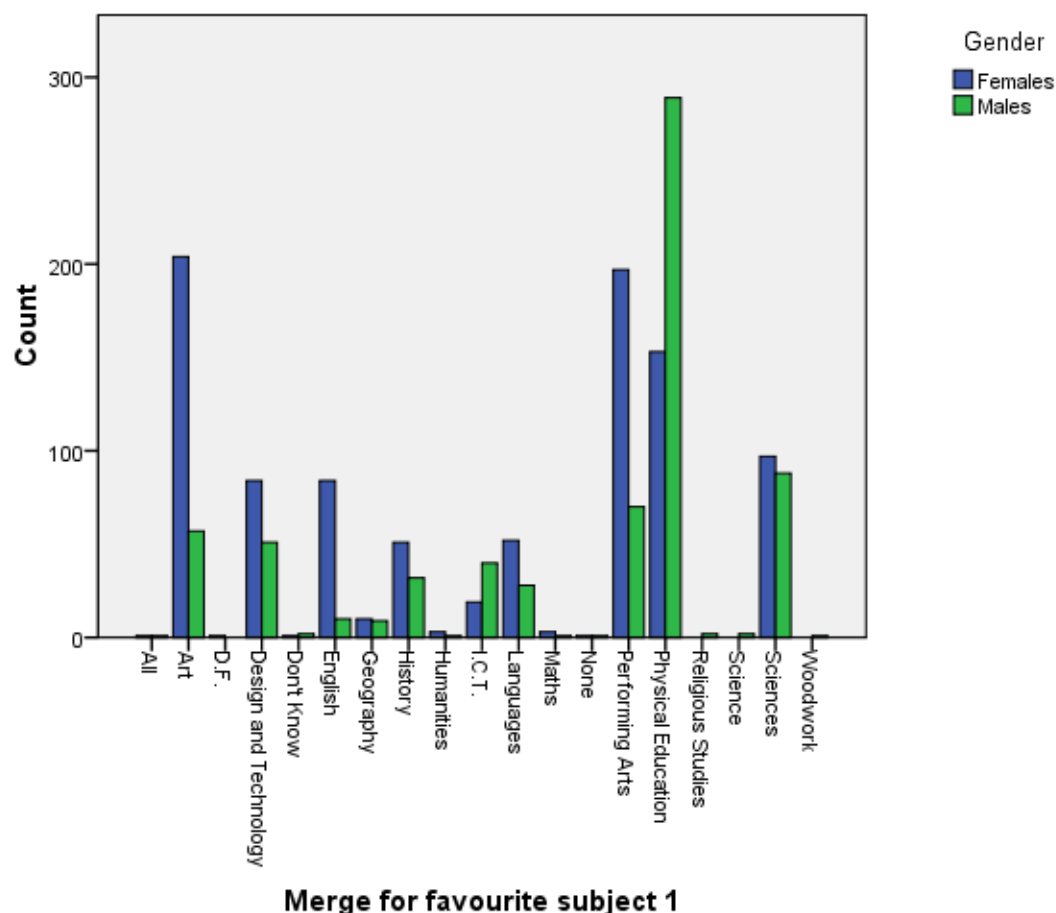
3.3.2 Favourite subjects

As languages are optional at GCSE, we decided to ask pupils about their favourite school subjects as responses to this question would give an indication of the sorts of subjects which provide competition for languages when GCSE choices are made. The most popular subjects in the Routes sample were Physical Education (PE), Performing Arts (Drama, Dance etc.) and Art. Previous studies have also reported on the popularity of Art while PE has been found to be liked by boys but not by girls.¹⁸ Accordingly, in the Routes survey, 41.4% of boys cited PE as their favourite subject compared with just 15.5% of girls. This is another indication that survey respondents shared attitudes that were broadly similar to those of other young people in the UK.

Figure 7: Favourite subjects, by pupil numbers and gender (Phase 1 pupil survey)

¹⁷ Atherton et al, 2009

¹⁸ e.g. Francis, 2000; Colley & Comber, 2003



As expected, students who named languages were subsequently found to be significantly more motivated in their responses to rating-scale statements than students who preferred any other subject. Pupils who favoured Physical Education or Design and Technology were the least motivated language learners. As Routes into Languages activities have included a particular focus on combining languages with sport, this raises interesting questions as to whether such an approach could help to improve motivation for language learning among these students. Several of the comments in the teachers' survey suggested that sport activities were enjoyed by their pupils.

Although languages are not as popular as the subjects listed above, 6.1% of pupils named a language as their favourite subject, which means that collectively languages were more commonly cited as favourites than other humanities subjects including English (5.8%), history (5.5%), geography (1.7%) and music (1.1%).

If survey responses are compared with actual GCSE entries for optional subjects in 2009, for example, it becomes clear that popularity does not necessarily always translate into choices as PE and Performing Arts both had fewer entries than French. Taken together, languages are more popular than some other

options at GCSE although this is not the case at subsequent decision-making points in years 11 and 12.¹⁹ Subjects are listed by GCSE entry and popularity in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Favourite subjects and GCSE entries

Subject	Number of GCSE entries (2009)	Favoured by pupils in survey
Physical Education	136,631	25.21%
Art	193, 578	15.4%
Performing Arts	117,669	14.7%
Drama 93,019		
Performing Arts 24,650		
Design and Technology	305, 809	8.8%
Languages	363,278	6.1%
French 188,688		
Spanish 67,070		
German 73,409		
Other Modern Languages 33,111		
History	219, 809	5.5%
Geography	196,018	1.2%

3.4 Components of language learning motivation (rating scales)

This section of the report focuses on students' responses to rating-scale statements.

Responses to each statement can be seen in Figure 9 below, which is followed by discussion of key themes arising from these responses.

Figure 9: Responses to rating-scale statements (Phase 1 pupil survey)

	Agree	Disagree
10. I want to learn a language because I think it will be useful for getting a job in the future.	82.2%	17.8%
11. I find learning languages fun.	66.54	33.46%

¹⁹ e.g. Cambridge Assessment, 2009

12. It is not important for me to do well at languages because there are other subjects I am good at.	73.66%	26.34%
13. I plan to study a language at GCSE.	57.64%	42.36%
14. I try as hard as I can to learn languages.	90.86	9.14%
15. I find learning languages difficult.	52.89%	47.11%
16. I want to learn a language because it will allow me to meet and talk to a range of people.	82.14%	17.86%
17. I want to learn a language because I want to find out more about the countries where it is spoken.	56.41%	43.59%
18. It doesn't matter if I make a lot of mistakes in another language, as long as people can understand me.	36.69%	63.31%
19. I use every opportunity to improve my knowledge of languages.	64.92%	35.08%
20. I want to learn a language because I want to make friends with people who speak it as their own language.	64.39%	35.61%
21. I would like to be able to speak another language perfectly.	81.4%	18.6%
22. I use every opportunity to improve my knowledge of other languages.	59.81%	40.19%
23. I want to learn languages so I can talk to people when I travel to a country where this language is spoken.	86.21%	13.79%
24. I think I am good at learning languages.	68.49%	31.51%
25. I don't need to learn languages because I will always live near people who speak my language.	78.65%	21.35%
26. I really enjoy learning languages.	66.9%	33.1%

3.4.1 Usefulness of languages for jobs and travel (instrumental motivational orientation)

There was particularly strong support among Routes respondents for the idea that languages would be useful for jobs and travel, pointing to the existence of an instrumental motivational orientation, which was also reported in Coleman's study.²⁰ Considerable efforts have been made over recent years to persuade students of potential extrinsic rewards associated with languages, not just through Routes into Languages activities but also through Languages Work (<http://www.languageswork.org.uk/home.aspx> – accessed 28 June 2010) and other initiatives. Teacher respondents in Fisher and Evan's (2009) report on the impact of the KS3 MFL Framework also emphasised the vocational benefits of language learning to encourage uptake among their students. It could be inferred from the positive findings in the Routes survey that initiatives are beginning to have some effect on learners' perceptions of the usefulness of

²⁰ Coleman, Galaczi & Astruc, 2007

languages although more research would be needed to confirm this. Girls' responses were more positive than those of boys but the gender gap was smaller than in other motivational components.

3.4.2 GCSE plans

National attainment tables seem to indicate that around 44% of pupils in England study a language for GCSE (<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/performance/tables/> - accessed 28 June 2010) but 58.2% of pupils in our sample agreed or strongly agreed that they would take a language for GCSE. Clearly, there are many factors involved in the conversion of desire into actual take-up including school policy (which may include compulsion), timetabling constraints and the attitudes of senior leaders in schools,²¹ all of which mean that pupils sometimes have to choose between subjects that they enjoy. So it cannot automatically be assumed that all the students in the Routes survey who expressed positive views will be able to study a language at GCSE but it is still a positive finding. Unsurprisingly, a higher proportion of girls planned to take GCSE than boys. There was also a slight rise in the likelihood of planning to study a language GCSE with age as 61.5% of year 9s agreed that they would do this.

3.4.3 Enjoyment

Two thirds of respondents agreed that they really enjoy learning languages (and found learning languages fun) with a larger proportion of girls agreeing (71.7%) than boys (60%). This is a relatively high level of enjoyment when compared with previous findings, which have tended to suggest that pupils do not enjoy languages. For example, Barton (2001) found that the above statement on enjoyment was agreed by just 23% of boys and 31% of girls. When asked to rank subjects in order of preference in earlier research, languages have appeared at or near the bottom of pupils' preferences.²² Of course, a low rank does not necessarily indicate a lack of enjoyment (merely that a low ranked subject is enjoyed less than a more highly ranked one). The reasons for the high incidence of enjoyment among Routes respondents are not clear but could include the fact that there were more female than male respondents. The effects of the bias towards the South East region of England in the sample are also difficult to ascertain. It could perhaps be inferred that the patterns of higher GCSE uptake in the South East²³ may be linked to greater enjoyment of languages although this is speculative especially given the finding that school achievement in languages suggested that the Routes sample was broadly typical of England as a whole. These responses do seem encouraging though as enjoyment has been closely linked to continuing with language study at all levels²⁴ including from KS3 into KS4.²⁵

²¹ Evans & Fisher, 2009

²² Lee et al, 1998; Stables & Wikeley, 1999

²³ e.g. CILT/ALL/ISMLA, 2009

²⁴ McPake et al, 1999; Fisher, 2001; Graham, 2002; Watts, 2003; Watts & Pickering, 2005

²⁵ Evans & Fisher, 2009

3.4.4 Identification with target community and interest in culture (integrative motivational orientation)

Almost two thirds of respondents indicated that they wanted to learn a language so that they could make friends with people who speak it as their own language and more than four fifths suggested that another language would enable them to meet and communicate with a wide range of people. This suggests evidence of an integrative motivational orientation even though pupils were less interested in finding out about countries where the language is spoken. Positive attitudes to native speakers are not always found in studies with UK school pupils.²⁶ Making friends with native speakers has previously been identified as a key reason for language learning²⁷ so apparent willingness in this area could be viewed as a particularly hopeful finding of the Routes survey. It could also be a reflection of the large numbers of girls in the sample as evidence of the integrative motivational orientation has been found to be more prevalent among girls²⁸ whereas ethnocentric attitudes have been more associated with boys.²⁹ In the Routes survey, 75.6% of boys acknowledged wanting to learn a language to meet and talk to a range of people and 56.2% wanted to make friends with native speakers compared with 86.7% and 70.1% of girls respectively. Whilst their attitudes were considerably more negative than those of girls, it is important to note that boys in the Routes survey have not shown indications of ethnocentrism. It is difficult to comment on the reasons for these seemingly positive responses.

3.4.5 Effort

Responses indicated a conscientious approach to languages among the Routes respondents. 90.9% agreed that they try as hard as they can to learn languages and 64.9% agreed that they use every opportunity to improve their knowledge of other languages. Other UK motivation studies have revealed that pupils emphasise the importance of effort in language learning,³⁰ which again points to the Routes respondents sharing common ground with other pupils. Girls suggested that they worked harder than boys in line with other findings.³¹

3.4.6 Perceived aptitude and achievement

Responses in this area suggested that more than two thirds perceived themselves to be good at languages and around four fifths expressed a desire to do well. This is another potentially encouraging finding because a feeling of being good at language learning and/or having a positive learning history have emerged as significant motivational factors.³² However, responses were somewhat ambiguous because more than half of students also indicated that they found language learning difficult, which was also

²⁶ Coleman, 2009

²⁷ Oxford, 1990

²⁸ Coleman, Galaczi & Astruc, 2007

²⁹ Barton, 1997; Carr & Pauwels, 2006

³⁰ e.g. Williams & Burden, 1999; Williams et al, 2004

³¹ Williams, Burden & Lanvers, 2002; DfES, 2007

³² e.g. Ushioda, 2001

reported to be problematic by several participants in the teachers' survey. Gender differences were small but girls were slightly more likely to report that they found languages difficult and, conversely, that they believed that they were good at languages.

3.4.7 Attitudes and exposure to languages other than English

Those who spoke languages other than English were found to be significantly more motivated than those who did not. Of these, students who attended after-school clubs were the most motivated. For the pupils who spoke French outside school 75.6% did so with family and relatives and 28% in an after school club. Similarly 87.2% of those speaking Spanish outside school spoke the languages with family and relatives and 27.8% in after school clubs. Of particular note was the fact that intentions to study GCSE were much higher among students who reported speaking another language outside school compared with those who did not.

Comparison of responses between students who spoke languages other than English outside school and those who did not can be seen in Appendix I.

3.5 Motivation by gender and school year

3.5.1 Motivation by gender

Survey findings indicated that females were significantly more motivated than males in all the key motivational dimensions (instrumental motivational orientation, integrative motivational orientation, effort and achievement). Girls were more likely to suggest that they found languages useful, enjoyed learning them, made an effort and had plans to study languages at GCSE. They also had more positive attitudes to native speakers than boys. This is very much in line with previous findings from MFL research in the UK.³³

3.5.2 By school year

Overall, responses to our survey showed that motivation was highest in year 7, which once again aligns with previous research.³⁴ It was lowest in year 8, which also follows the well-established dip in motivation across the curriculum in year 8.³⁵ However, in the Routes sample motivation in year 9 was significantly higher than in year 8 (although not compared with year 7). Coleman's survey also showed more positive findings in year 9 than in year 8 but in the Routes sample the effect of this was to demonstrate only a very slight downward trend between years 7 and 9. This would seem to suggest that the Routes sample included highly motivated year 9 students.

3.6 Phase I summary

³³ e.g. Coleman, Galaczi & Astruc, 2007; Williams et al, 2004; Williams, Burden & Lanvers, 2002

³⁴ e.g. Chambers, 1999; Williams et al, 2002, Coleman et al, 2007

³⁵ Lord & Jones, 2006

Findings from the Phase 1 questionnaire were largely very encouraging and indicate that for the most part, learners in our sample enjoy learning languages and find them useful. A relatively high proportion of them suggested that they have plans to study a language at GCSE. These are more positive attitudes to languages than is normally the case in surveys where participants across the ability range have been surveyed. The reasons for such positive findings are unclear and could involve a variety of factors. It could infer, for example, that the Routes into Languages questionnaire was completed by groups of high-achieving pupils. This would also explain the disproportionate number of female respondents. However, other evidence, which included socio-economic data on respondents and the achievement profiles of participating schools, suggested that the sample was broadly typical of England as a whole. It is, therefore, surprising that enjoyment levels and the desire to study a language at GCSE were much higher than that reported in previous studies which asked the same questions of pupils. As the questions used were identical to ones employed in previous studies it is possible to discount acquiescence bias or a Hawthorne effect as being significant factors.

Another possible explanation for the positive attitudes to languages is that teachers who involve their students in Routes into Languages could be highly motivated. If true, this would introduce a sample bias. This hypothesis, which is speculative, would also assume that more highly motivated teachers transfer this motivation to students.

The purpose of the initial questionnaire was to measure attitudes to language learning and then for these to be followed up after a school had engaged with Routes into Languages activities in order to gauge evidence of attitudinal change over a period of time.

4 Phase 2 Case studies (Follow up)

This part of the report deals with findings from the Phase 2 follow-up questionnaires, which were completed by a small number of schools nationally. These are reported as case studies.

4.1 Background to the case studies

Phase 2 questionnaires were designed to elicit indications of attitudinal change over time among small groups of pupils who had participated in Routes activities and who had completed the Phase 1 questionnaires. Phase 2 questionnaires consisted of three main sections:

- Background questions (gender, year group etc);
- Tick box questions gauging participation in a series of Routes activities and events (although the Routes into Languages brand was not used exclusively because pupils would not necessarily recognise this);
- Likert rating scales on attitudes to languages, which elicited information on the same components of motivation as the Phase 1 questionnaire and which were devised to measure attitudinal change.

Phase 2 questionnaires were matched to Phase 1 questionnaires from the same pupils and responses were compared for evidence of attitudinal change. At this stage of the Routes programme the central Routes team focused on students' intentions to study GCSE, their intentions to go to university (because these relate to the core mission of Routes) and their attitudes towards the usefulness of languages because this was highlighted by teachers in their survey as an area where there had been particularly strong attitudinal change. We are aware that factors other than engagement with Routes into Languages could have been implicated in attitudinal change.

In some instances, teachers from the case study schools completed the teacher questionnaire. This served to triangulate data from learners.

4.2 Characteristics of case studies

Twelve case study schools returned Phase 2 surveys which involved groups of the same pupils who had completed both questionnaires. In some instances learners completed a follow-up questionnaire without having done the first questionnaire. These responses had to be discounted. The regional distribution of case study schools is shown in Figure 10. For operational reasons there were no case studies in the East Midlands or South East regions.

Figure 10: Regional distribution of case studies (Phase 2)

Region	No. of case studies
East	1
London	1
North East	1
North West	3
South West	1
West Midlands	4
Yorkshire and the Humber	1

These schools were wide-ranging in terms of their GCSE attainment. Details of the schools' public examination results (which are available in the public domain) are included in the description of the cases. Many of them have below average GCSE attainment in MFL. 11 of the 12 schools were mixed comprehensives and one was a girls' comprehensive school. Case studies are composed of different year groups in KS3 as follows:

- Six groups completed Phase 1 questionnaires in September of year 8 and then completed Phase 2 questionnaires between six and eight months later.

- Four groups completed Phase 1 questionnaires in September of year 9 and then completed Phase 2 questionnaires between six and eight months later (as above).
- One group completed Phase 1 questionnaires in year 7 and was followed up with Phase 2 in year 8.
- One group completed Phase 1 questionnaires in year 8 and was followed up with Phase 2 in year 9.

In eight cases data from students was supplemented by a teacher questionnaire.

Details of the cases follow in the next sections.

4.3 Case 1: Market Town Academy

Market Town Academy is a mixed comprehensive school in an English provincial town and is also a high-achieving school. GCSE results are well above average with 70% of pupils getting grade C or above in Maths and English. Nine in ten pupils achieve a GCSE language at Grade G or above, the vast majority of whom get at least a grade C.

A teacher at Market Town Academy completed the teacher questionnaire and indicated that university staff had visited the school as part of Routes into Languages and that students also had opportunities to participate in Gifted and Talented activities. She agreed that students were more aware of the usefulness of languages for careers than before their involvement with Routes and that students had expressed more interest in studying a language for GCSE than before. S/he commented as follows on the impact of Routes into Languages on her students:

“It has been a very positive experience for the students to discover a non-European language and they seem more inclined to follow such a course”

Phase 1 and Phase 2 questionnaires were completed by 21 students (12 girls and nine boys) in year 7 and in the autumn term of year 8. There were indications of positive attitudinal change between year 7 and year 8, particularly in the area of GCSE plans. For example, 20 students agreed that they were planning to take a language GCSE in year 8 compared with just 14 who agreed this in year 7. There were also slight improvements in awareness of the importance of languages for jobs and in attitudes towards going to university.

In summary, Market Town Academy is a school where students generally do well in languages. Questionnaire findings showed indications of positive attitudinal change after engagement with Routes into Languages and this is supported by views obtained in the teacher's questionnaire.

4.4 Case 2: Urban Scolastics

Urban Scolastics is a mixed comprehensive school in a large city. Its GCSE results for English and Maths are slightly above the national average. A quarter of pupils obtain a GCSE in a language, two-thirds of whom get a C or above. This means that achievement is below the national average in languages.

There was no teacher questionnaire for this school.

Pupils indicated that during the course of the year, university students had visited their school. Some also suggested that they had been visited by university staff and that they had taken part in activities involving languages and careers, film and events for the European Day of Languages.

Seventeen pupils in year 9 (10 girls, seven boys) completed an initial questionnaire in September 2009 and follow-ups between March and May 2010. There were indications of positive attitudinal change between the first and second questionnaires especially in the awareness of the importance of languages for future jobs. Fifteen students acknowledged this in the follow-up questionnaire compared with just eight who agreed it in the initial questionnaire. There was also a small increase in the numbers of students who suggested that they wanted to go to university. There was no change in attitudes to taking a language GCSE as seven students agreed this in both questionnaires.

In Urban Scolastics therefore, positive attitudinal change was found in increased awareness of the importance of languages but this did not translate into stronger intentions to study a language at GCSE. The reasons for this are not clear.

4.5 Case 3: Ultra Urban High School

Ultra Urban High is a mixed comprehensive school. Its GCSE results for English and Mathematics are just below the national average, though historically its results were very low, indicating an improvement in achievement in recent years. Around a quarter of pupils gain a language GCSE, most of whom get a grade C or above. This suggests that achievement is below the national average in languages.

A teacher from Ultra Urban High completed the teacher's questionnaire and indicated that students had taken part in a range of Routes into Languages activities including visits to universities, visits from university staff and students, Gifted and Talented activities and events for languages and careers. She believed that students were more aware of the usefulness of languages for careers, were more interested in talking about going to university and in studying a language GCSE as a result of involvement with Routes. In comments on the impact of Routes on students, she suggested that students had been motivated by curriculum enrichment events and had really enjoyed café activities and practical sessions although she felt that the impact was more evident with high-achieving students. She also said that involvement with the project had helped students to gain *'a deeper understanding of languages within the world context'*.

As well as the activities outlined above by the teacher, some Ultra Urban High students also suggested that they had been involved in languages and film events.

Phase 1 and Phase 2 questionnaires were completed by 24 students (14 girls, 10 boys) in year 9. There were small indications of positive attitudinal change in all areas. For example, 14 students agreed that they were planning to do a language GCSE in the Phase 2 questionnaire compared with just 11 who agreed this in Phase 1. 22 students acknowledged that languages would be useful for a future job in Phase 2 compared with 20 who acknowledged this in Phase 1.

Students at Ultra Urban High therefore show evidence of more positive attitudes following their engagement with Routes although we cannot be sure what other factors may have been involved.

4.6 Case 4: Seaside College

Seaside College is a mixed comprehensive school in a medium-sized town. Although its GCSE performances in English and Maths are comparatively very good, only 1 in 3 students achieve a GCSE in a language. This places the school close to the national average in languages. Virtually all those who do obtain an MFL GCSE achieve a grade C or above, suggesting the language study is confined to the most able pupils.

A teacher from Seaside College completed the teacher survey and indicated that pupils had taken part in activities for the European Day of Languages and for Gifted and Talented students. The school had also received visits from university students. As a result of involvement in Routes, she indicated that students were more aware of the usefulness of languages for jobs and were more interested in talking about going to university and in studying a language at GCSE. She added, however, that the impact had been limited to those students who had taken part in activities and that the efforts of teachers at the school to follow up with other pupils had been less successful. This highlights the difficulties of reaching all pupils.

Phase 1 and Phase 2 questionnaires were completed by eight girls in year 9. We do not know why the survey was limited to girls. In Phase 2, there was a slight increase in the incidence of wanting to go to university but apart from this there was little change in attitudes although responses showed that most of these students did enjoy languages.

In summary, this case involved a small number of girls who showed slight signs of positive attitudinal change, which were focused on aspirations of going to university and not on attitudes to languages (although these were nonetheless positive).

4.7 Case 5: Mid Town Community School

Mid Town Community School is a mixed comprehensive school located in a small town. Although its GCSE results in English and Maths are only just below the national average, its performance in MFL is significantly lower. Less than 1 in 5 students attain a GCSE A*-C in a language.

A teacher from Mid Town completed the teacher questionnaire and indicated that students had taken part in Routes into Languages activities involving languages and work. She suggested that as a result of

their participation in Routes into Languages, her students were more aware of the usefulness of languages and were more interested in talking about going to university and in studying a language at GCSE. In commenting on the impact of Routes into Languages on students, she wrote:

“The students really enjoyed the activities and have a wider understanding of languages and their importance. They feel encouraged to learn a language”

In addition to the languages work activities outlined by their teacher above, students also suggested that they had visited a university and had taken part in Gifted and Talented and sport and languages activities.

Phase 1 and Phase 2 questionnaires were completed by seven girls in year 8. We do not know why the questionnaires were only completed by girls. Positive attitudes towards languages were expressed in both questionnaires. There was little alteration in students' awareness of the importance of languages for jobs or in expressions of interest in going to university. There were, however, small indications of positive change in attitudes to GCSE. In the Phase 2 questionnaire, all seven learners acknowledged that they were more interested in studying a language at GCSE than before and three of them agreed strongly. This compared with six students who expressed plans to study GCSE in Phase 1 with none agreeing strongly.

This case involved a small number of year 8 girls who already seemed to have favourable attitudes to languages. There were small indications of positive change with regard to plans for GCSE study, which is encouraging in a school with relatively low GCSE achievement in languages.

4.8 Case 6: Town Academy

Town Academy is a mixed comprehensive school which teaches French, German and Spanish. The number of pupils getting GCSE grade C or above in English and Maths is around 10% below the national average of 49.8%. The percentage of pupils gaining a GCSE at grade C or above in a Modern Foreign Language is around 10% compared to the national average of around one in three. Only 1 in 5 pupils leave the school with a GCSE language at G or above, indicating very low take-up of languages in Key Stage 4.

In the teacher survey, a teacher at this school reported that:

“The role that Routes into Languages plays in supporting high schools in this region is paramount.”

The teacher credited Routes into Languages with helping to raise take-up at GCSE from eight pupils in 2009-10 to 43 enrolled for 2010-11. She felt that presenters who visited the school from outside as well as the subsequent support that the school received made it easier to make the case for languages.

26 pupils in year 8 (15 boys, 11 girls) completed Phase 1 and Phase 2 questionnaires and there were signs of improved attitudes in the follow-up questionnaire. Of these, ten reported that they were more likely to take a language at GCSE in Phase 2 than they were in Phase 1. This included five students who

had explicitly stated that they did not intend to study GCSE at the beginning of the year. Six pupils exhibited more positive attitudes of the usefulness of languages at work in Phase 2 than in Phase 1.

This case represents a positive change in intentions to study languages at GCSE during the course of year 8 in a group of students which included more boys than girls in a school with low uptake of languages in KS4.

4.9 Case 7: Mid Shire College

Mid Shire College is a mixed comprehensive school, in a medium-sized town. In this school, 43% of pupils gain GCSE grade C or above in English and Mathematics, which is slightly below the national average. However, achievement in Modern Foreign Languages is around half the national average, indicating low uptake in KS4.

A teacher completed the teacher survey for this school and suggested that pupils had been involved in university visits, European Day of Languages activities and careers events. She additionally reported that they had all gained personally from taking part in a residential event and that such activities had broadened the mind set of pupils and their parents.

Ten pupils in year 8 completed Phase 1 and Phase 2 questionnaires. In both surveys all 10 learners agreed that languages would be useful for future jobs. However, three of these agreed this strongly in Phase 1 compared with five who agreed it strongly in Phase 2. In the first questionnaire, five students indicated that they were not planning to do a language at GCSE as opposed to just three in the second questionnaire. Additionally, only one pupil strongly agreed that they intended to do a GCSE in Phase 1 whereas in Phase 2, four students strongly agreed that they were more likely to do this. There were no changes in attitudes to HE as nine learners suggested that they wanted to go to university in both questionnaires.

In summary, this case shows an improvement in attitudes towards the usefulness of languages and towards languages GCSE among a small group of students whose teacher suggested that all those who had participated in Routes activities had benefited.

4.10 Case 8: Sunshine Valley School

Sunshine Valley School is a mixed comprehensive school where the percentage of pupils gaining GCSE grade C English and Mathematics is around 10% below the national average. Despite this, achievement in languages is just half the national average.

A teacher completed the teacher survey for this school and indicated that learners had taken part in visits to a university, European Day of Languages activities, taster days and residential events. She suggested that students were more interested in talking about going to university following engagement with Routes.

Eight pupils in year 8 filled in both Phase 1 and Phase 2 questionnaires at Sunshine Valley. There were no changes in attitudes to university between the two questionnaires. However, in Phase 2 there was a slight improvement in perceptions of the relevance of languages in the workplace. Seven pupils agreed this in the first survey compared with eight in the second survey. Similarly, six respondents reported that they would like to do a language GCSE in Phase 1. In Phase 2, this had improved with all eight respondents indicating that they were interested in studying for a GCSE.

In summary, this small group of year 8 students showed more favourable attitudes to studying a GCSE and to the usefulness of languages in the follow-up survey.

4.11 Case 9: Junction Academy

Junction Academy is a mixed comprehensive school. Achievement in GCSE English and Maths is very close to the national average but just 15% of pupils obtain a GCSE language at grade C or above. This means that achievement in languages is comparatively weak. Only a small number of students attain GCSE grades D-G, indicating that GCSE language study is restricted to higher ability pupils.

A teacher survey was completed for this school. The teacher respondent reported that pupils had attended and enjoyed language taster sessions and had continued to talk about them afterwards. She also felt that her students were more aware of the possible usefulness of languages in future careers following attendance at a Routes event in November 2009.

Nine year 8 pupils (six girls and three boys) completed Phase 1 and phase 2 questionnaires. There were no changes in the perceptions of the usefulness of languages as all nine students agreed this in both questionnaires. However in Phase 1, six respondents indicated that they were intending to do a GCSE. In Phase 2 this had extended to all nine. There were also more favourable responses to university as five learners reported that they wanted to go in the first questionnaire compared with seven in the second survey.

To sum up, in this small group of year 8 students there were signs of positive attitudinal change towards GCSE study of languages and to the idea of university in the follow-up questionnaires.

4.12 Case 10: City School

City School is a mixed comprehensive school in a large city. The school's achievement in five GCSE at A*-C including English and Maths is close to the national average but only one in five leave school with a GCSE A*-C in a modern language, which is significantly below the national average of around one in three.

There was no teacher survey for this school.

25 year 9 pupils (18 girls and seven boys) completed Phase 1 and Phase 2 questionnaires. In the Phase 1 survey, 11 students indicated that they intended to take languages at GCSE while 14 did not. In Phase 2, responses indicated that six of the 14 students had changed their minds and suggested that they would

now be studying languages. Five of these agreed strongly that they would progress to GCSE. Similarly, there was an increase in perceptions of the usefulness of languages in the workplace between Phase 1 and Phase 2 with 23 students reporting this in the second questionnaire compared with 20 in the first questionnaire.

In summary, this is an encouraging case that shows a substantial shift in studying intentions during the course of year 9 as well as signs of positive attitudinal change towards the relevance of languages.

4.13 Case 11: Metropolitan Centre

Metropolitan Centre is a high achieving comprehensive school in a large city. Over 85% of pupils gain five GCSEs grade C or above including English and Mathematics and over 60% achieve grades A*-C in a language. Almost all students leave with a G or above in a Modern Languages, which suggests that language study to GCSE is mandatory in this school. A particular feature of this school was that many respondents spoke languages other than English outside school, including Urdu, Yoruba, French, Punjabi and Igbo.

There was no teacher survey at Metropolitan Centre.

21 pupils in Year 8 completed Phase 1 and Phase 2 questionnaires (13 boys and eight girls) and there were signs of positive attitudinal change in the second questionnaire. All respondents were studying two languages (French and Spanish) and one pupil was taking French, German and Spanish. All students indicated that they wanted to go to university in both surveys. In the Phase 1 questionnaire, 17 students reported that languages are important for future jobs. By Phase 2 this had increased to 20. Similarly, there was a slight improvement in the numbers intending to study a language at GCSE. 14 respondents indicated this in Phase 1 compared with 16 in Phase 2.

In summary, signs of positive attitudinal change were reported at this school in increased intentions to study a language at GCSE and improved awareness of the usefulness of languages among a sample of year 8 students, which included more boys than girls.

4.14 Case 12: Girl Power Faculty

Girl Power Faculty is a girls' comprehensive school located in a city. Achievement in MFL GCSE is close to the national average with approximately one in three students obtaining a GCSE grade A*-C. Unlike some other schools in this study, achievement in MFL GCSE compares favourably with attainment in English and Mathematics. Most of the pupils questioned reported that they spoke a language other than English so the relatively high achievement in MFL GCSE may be due to speakers of community languages taking GCSE in that language. Urdu was the most widely spoken (by 15) and other languages mentioned were French, Bengali, Somali, and Punjabi.

There was no teacher survey returned from this school.

20 girls completed a Phase 1 questionnaire in Year 8, which was followed up with a Phase 2 questionnaire in Year 9. Attitudinal change between the first and second surveys was very slight. In Phase 1, all respondents agreed that languages are important for future jobs but in Phase 2 an additional five students agreed this strongly. Somewhat unusually, there was a small decrease in declared intentions to study a language at GCSE. In Phase 1, 18 students reported this compared with 17 in Phase 2.

To sum up, responses from this girls' school included a majority of pupils who spoke languages other than English outside school. There were small signs of positive attitudinal change in the perceived relevance of languages for employability between year 8 and year 9 following engagement with Routes into Languages. However, this was counterbalanced by a small reduction in the numbers of students planning to progress to a languages GCSE.

4.15 Summary of case studies

These 12 case study schools include eight with GCSE achievement that is below the national average in MFL. Despite this, 11 of the 12 cases show indications of positive attitudinal change between the Phase 1 and Phase 2 questionnaires. Of these, nine feature improved attitudes to the idea of GCSE language study. It is difficult to ascertain the extent to which Routes activities are responsible for this or whether there were other variables at play; this is one of the limitations of the case studies and of the initial Phase 1 questionnaire. However, evidence of changing attitudes among pupils is also corroborated in some instances by teacher surveys, where it is proposed that Routes activities have improved pupils' motivation. It is also interesting that although the extent of attitudinal change varied, it is consistent across different cases involving learners at different points of their KS3 language learning journeys. Perhaps most encouraging is the fact that six of the 12 cases record positive improvements in attitudes between the start and end of year 8 as this is not normally a period when learners show increased motivation.³⁶

We believe that these surveys contribute to the overall evidence which is emerging in relation to the impact of Routes into Languages and we are encouraged by the high proportion of learners who find languages fun, enjoyable, useful and ultimately rewarding to study.

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³⁶ Lord & Jones, 2006

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