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Committee
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
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Dear Joan

1+2 Languages Policy – Progress Update

Thank you for your letter of 19 January 2021 in which the Committee requested clarifications in relation to the 1+2 languages policy update which was considered on 14 January 2021.

The Scottish Government's response to this letter is provided below. The Committee's queries are shown in bold and the Scottish Government's response is shown in plain type.

The Committee notes that French and German language teachers accounted for 55% of all language teachers in secondary schools in 2019. The Committee would welcome your views on how the 1+2 policy can achieve its aims of expanding language learning with a reduced number of teachers available in some key languages.

The principal aim of the 1+2 languages policy is to provide all learners with an entitlement to learn two additional languages during the broad general education from P1 to S3. In particular, it focuses on providing a 10 year experience and framework of progression through the primary and secondary sectors.

In line with the 2012 recommendations of the Languages Working Group, there is no hierarchy of languages within the 1+2 policy. However, the first additional language (L2) has to be a language available as a National Qualification and is therefore one of: French, Spanish, German, Italian, Gaelic (Learners), Urdu, Mandarin, or Cantonese.

The second additional language (L3) can be any language, and our annual survey of local authorities on the implementation of the 1+2 policy cites languages such as Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Japanese, Scots, Latin, and British Sign Language being taught as L3¹.

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/12-languages-implementation-findings-2019-local-authority-survey/>

The survey shows that French is the most commonly taught language as L2, being offered in 88% of primary schools and 89% of secondary schools; Spanish is second with 10% of primary schools and 19% of secondary schools; and German is third with 2% of primary schools and 11% of secondary schools.

We expect the secondary workforce statistics to reflect these school choices and trends. While the overall number of language teachers in the secondary sector has remained fairly stable, with a slight decline of 5.7% since 2013, we have seen increases in individual subjects such as Spanish and the 'Other Modern Languages' category. We understand that this latter group is comprised of those teaching multiple languages such as French, Spanish and German.

This means that the data does not allow us to draw definite conclusions about the total numbers of teachers in Scotland who are qualified to teach any specific language. However, we engage closely with local authorities to gauge whether particular needs are emerging. Modern Languages has also been designated as a priority subject for initial teacher education intakes for over 15 years, although there are no targets set for individual languages.

We continue to prioritise financial support for the 1+2 approach, with £35.6 million invested since 2013 to enable local authorities to implement it in schools. This includes a further £2.4 million in funding recently announced for 2021-22 to enable them to consolidate on the progress made so far and to embed the policy across Scottish schools.

Secondly, in the same annex, a table details the numbers of teachers of 'Other modern languages' in secondary schools. The Committee notes that this category of teachers is described in the annex as being formed "of teachers whose main subject is recorded as 'modern languages' but are likely to be predominantly teaching some combination of the other specified languages". The Committee would be grateful if you could provide a breakdown of the languages covered under this category.

The statistics on secondary teachers' main subject which have been published as 'Other Modern Languages' includes teachers whose main subject is returned by local authorities as either Russian, Mandarin or Other Modern Languages. The vast majority of these are teachers whose main subject has been returned as 'Other Modern Languages' as shown in the breakdown of the 2019 data below.

FTE of secondary school teachers by main subject taught, 2019

Main Subject	FTE
Mandarin	16.5
Other Modern Languages	379.1
Russian	0.2
Total / Other Modern Languages	395.8

Excludes head teachers and depute head teachers.

We do not have any further breakdown of this category, but understand that this group is comprised of those teaching multiple languages. For example, a teacher who teaches French and Spanish could either be recorded as a teacher whose main subject is French and other subject is Spanish, or as a teacher whose main subject is Other Modern Languages.

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Thirdly, Annex A of your letter on ‘Language Attainment 2020’ provides a breakdown of entries and passes for national examinations in modern languages. The Committee would welcome data on the total number of students presenting for examination across all subjects at each SCQF Level in order to put the modern language figures into context.

Because each student can be presented for examination in several subjects, data on entries and passes is recorded per subject. This means we cannot provide figures on the total number of students presenting for examination across all subjects at each SCQF level.

In order to provide meaningful data to put the modern languages figures into context, we present below a comparison of entries and passes in modern languages subjects against all subjects. This data uses entries and passes in National Courses at SCQF levels 3-7 from attainment statistics published by the SQA in December 2020².

Entries

SCQF level	Modern Languages	All Subjects	%
Level 3	986	21,639	4.56%
Level 4	4,816	102,492	4.70%
Level 5	16,028	300,683	5.33%
Level 6	7,422	186,227	3.99%
Level 7	1,243	23,571	5.27%
Total	30,495	634,612	4.81%

Passes

SCQF level	Modern Languages	All Subjects	%
Level 3	946	20,106	4.71%
Level 4	4,609	94,711	4.87%
Level 5	15,175	288,999	5.25%
Level 6	7,188	179,210	4.01%
Level 7	1,202	23,025	5.22%
Total	29,120	606,051	4.80%

These results should be seen as unique, due to the disruption caused by Covid-19 and the cancellation of the exam diet. These results should not be compared to those in previous or future years without full consideration of the different way they were arrived at in 2020.

² <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/64717.8312.html>

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Finally, in the ‘Findings from the 2019 local authority survey’ section of your letter, you state that the survey found that 70% of secondary schools are providing the full L2 entitlement from S1 to S3. The survey also found that 83% of secondary schools are providing the full L3 entitlement from S1 to S3. The Committee would welcome clarification of why 83% of secondary schools are providing L3 entitlement but only 70% of secondary schools are providing this entitlement at L2.

The full entitlement differs between L2 and L3, meaning that the results to these questions are not fully comparable.

By full entitlement for L2, we mean that the first additional language is provided by primary schools continuously from P1 to P7, and that the same L2 is provided continuously by secondary schools from S1 to the end of S3. The results of our annual survey showed that, for a variety of reasons, secondary schools might not provide the full entitlement until the end of S3, hence the figure for L2 in secondary schools being lower.

In contrast, the guiding principle for L3 is flexibility, according to local needs and preferences, and may be introduced in a number of ways. Furthermore, the policy does not require secondary schools to teach the same L3 language that was studied in primary school, although it may be. As secondary modern language departments are, in the main, staffed by teachers who have qualifications in more than one modern language, it is relatively straightforward for them to timetable and offer a L3 at some point within the broad general education.

I trust you find this information helpful. The Scottish Government will provide its next update to the Committee regarding the 1+2 languages policy in due course.

JOHN SWINNEY

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