Ondata Research

Review of the MFL Student Mentoring Project 2015-2020

By Dr Lizzie Rushton and Laura Thomas

January 2020
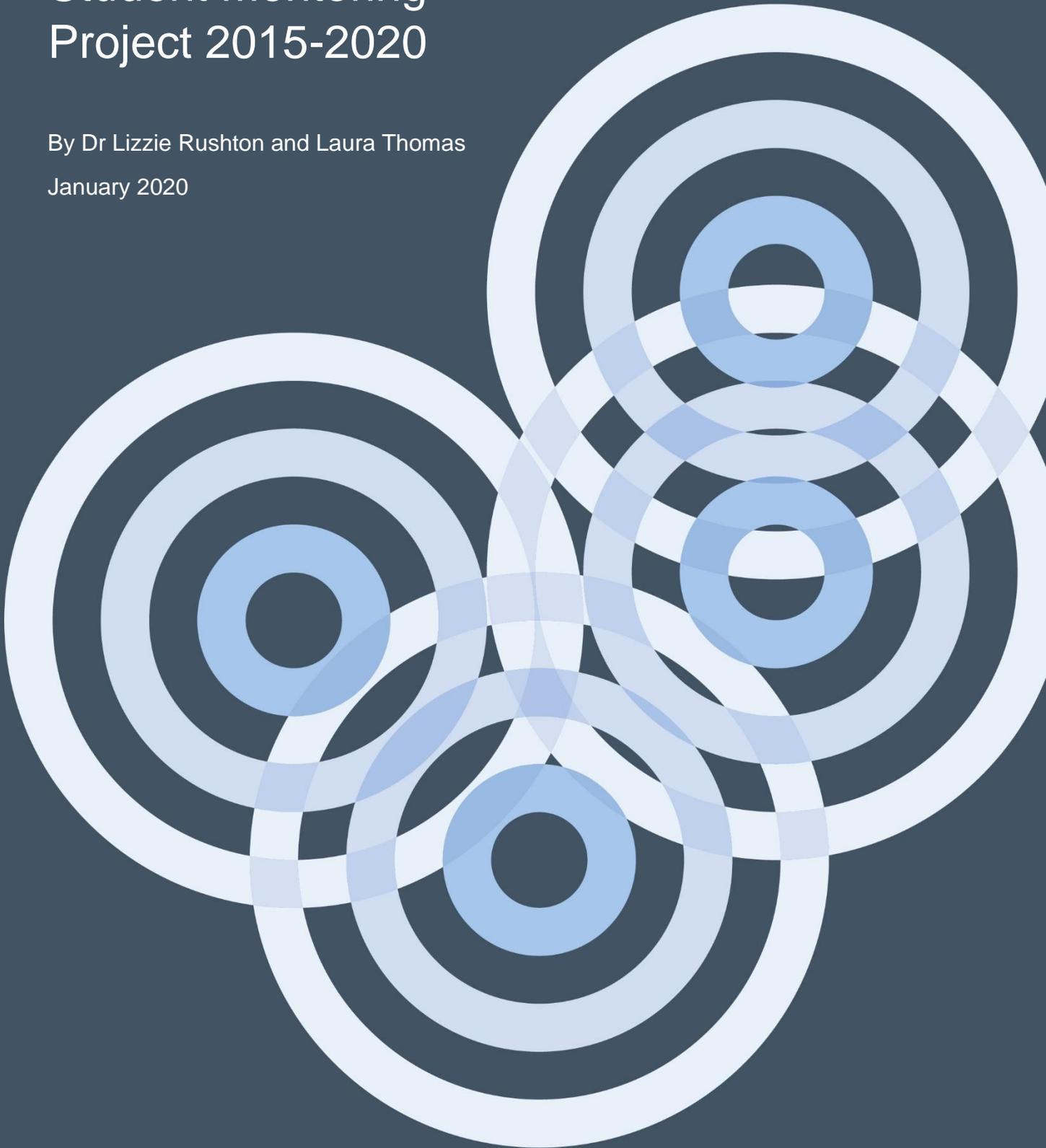
Contents

1. Executive Summary

Since 2015, the numbers taking MFL GCSE in Wales have reduced by nearly a fifth (Welsh Government, 2018). The Welsh Government have been co-ordinating a number of schemes as part of their Global Futures strategy to address this decline.

Beginning in 2015 the MFL Student Mentoring Project has partnered with schools across Wales and provided the opportunity for partnerships between schools and university. Two consecutive evaluation reports demonstrate that this project has had a positive impact on the numbers of young people intending to take MFL at GCSE (Tinsley, 2017; 2018). Quality of the project has been maintained during a period of significant growth as is seen in the consistent positive impact. This positive impact has been maintained as the project has grown in size to work with over 100 schools, showing the infrastructure and the approach of the project can be consistently applied as the number of schools supported grows.

In the context of a declining uptake of MFL GCSE, it is more important than ever to continue the support of schemes which do show success in improving the numbers intending to take MFL GCSE. In each year of the project there has been a higher than average uptake of MFL GCSEs amongst mentees against a background of declining uptake nationally.

This report has taken an overview of the MFL Student Mentoring Project through further analysis of existing data and also draws on sources of data not previously considered in prior evaluations.

Through this process, four main aspects have been identified and are discussed in further detail:

- The project framework.
- Supporting the new curriculum.
- University-school partnership.
- The role of the mentor.

As a result of this review, it is clear that there are other aspects which can form part of future evaluation. These include:

- Role of the teacher and benefits to them.
- Teacher recruitment and retention.
- Exploring demographic profiles of mentees.

In parallel to the evaluation of the MFL Student Mentoring Project there are potential areas for academic research. Topics include:

- How projects such as this one can support the development and roll-out of the new curriculum.
- What are the successful strategies for building sustainable school-university partnerships that go through from primary to higher education?
- Competition between Welsh and MFL.
- Mentoring as a vehicle for integration with local communities.

2. Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in Wales

The MFL Student Mentoring Project forms part of the Global Futures strategy led by Welsh Government. Running from 2015-2020 this encompasses a wide range of activities across Wales with a range of aims:

a) Increase number of young people choosing to study MFL at GCSE, A-level and higher education.

b) Improve the teaching and learning experience of MFL for learners aged 7-19, building towards a "bilingual plus one" system beginning in year 5 as part of the *Languages, Literacy, and Communication* Area of Learning and Experience.

c) Maintain and improve on the attainment levels currently being achieved at MFL.

In recent years there has been a drop in the numbers taking French, German and Spanish at GCSE in Wales, with only a small proportion of the total number of GCSE students opting for MFL, for example in 2015-16 there were 32,200 pupils in year 11 (BESA, 2020) of which only 6,891 took a modern language qualification as table 1 below demonstrates.

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
French	4124 (59.8%)	3558 (58.6%)	3442 (60.7%)
German	1072 (15.6%)	717 (11.8%)	760 (13.4%)
Spanish	1252 (18.2%)	1351 (22.2%)	1029 (18.1%)
Other	443 (6.4%)	447 (7.4%)	442 (7.8%)
Total entries	6891	6073	5673

Table 1. Uptake of MFL GCSE by year (percentage showing uptake of different languages, based on total taking MFL) Source: Welsh Government, 2018.

The commonly reported barriers to increasing uptake at GCSE and beyond include:

• Insufficient curriculum time (Language Trends, 2017; 2018).
• Limited options slots available for MFL which is in competition with the Welsh Baccalaureate and compulsory Welsh (Language Trends, 2017; 2018).
• Perceived difficulty of MFL GCSE compared to other subjects (Graham, 2004).
• Schools not running GCSE or A-level classes as uptake is small (5-10 students) (Language Trends. 2017; 2018).
• Discontinuity in MFL language learning between the primary and secondary phases of schooling (Chambers, 2019).

Issues with teacher recruitment may also restrict schools' abilities to offer a full programme of MFL options. According to the Language Trends (2017) report 36% of schools only had one full time MFL teacher and in the 2018 report, 8% of schools did not have a fully staffed MFL department and 25% reported difficulties in recruiting teachers.

There are a range of activities that form part of the Global Futures plan that are aiming to address these issues.

3. Summary of Key Findings

The aim of this report is to take an overview of the MFL Student Mentoring Project since it began in 2015. This review has included a wide range of data (as outlined in section 4) and should be read in the context of existing evaluation reports (Tinsley, 2017; 2018; 2019b). To provide an overview of the wider context, the key findings from previous reports are summarised in this section.

The first evaluation report (Tinsley, 2017) encompasses the first two cycles of mentoring across 2016-2017. Cycle one was with 136 mentees and cycle two increased to 868. There were various reported impacts on mentees, mentors and the schools participating:

- Mentors provided a positive role model and were directly able to demonstrate the benefits of studying a modern foreign language, for example the opportunity to travel and work abroad.
- The training and experience provided to mentors will be carried forward into their future careers.
- Teachers reported that mentees built their confidence and resilience around their MFL studies.
- Through participation in the project, schools were given the opportunity to build a partnership with a university and as a result the profile of MFL was raised in the school.

The experience of mentoring positively impacted on the mentees' GCSE choices, with increases seen within each cycle. For example, in cycle 2 there was a 51% increase in the stated intention to take an MFL GCSE by mentees.

The second evaluation report (Tinsley, 2018) addressed the blended model of mentoring, called Digi-Languages, where instead of all sessions being face to face, the first and last session were face to face. The remaining being delivered online and communication with mentors taking place via e-mail.

> *"The digital project was well designed and the pupils enjoyed learning on the computers."*

Teacher (2017-18).

This report concluded that the "Digi-mentoring" approach was just as effective as the face to face sessions. There were additional logistical IT challenges to be overcome but the mentee experience was still of a high level, with over 90% reporting their experience as "Excellent" or "Good". Of those who participated and weren't sure whether or not to take an MFL GCSE, following participation, an additional 28% opted to take an MFL GCSE taking the overall percentage of the cohort to 43%.

Across both reports there were comments on the wider school environment and the barriers to taking MFL GCSE that were not related to pupils' decision-making. This included the availability of some languages, for example even though Spanish is a popular option there is often a lack of teachers. In other cases, teachers reported issues with timetabling and competition against science and other subjects when it comes to options.

> *"Some of the pupils who took part in the programme came to speak to me to say how much they wanted to do MFL but their choices were limited."*

Teacher (2017-18)

The third report (Tinsley, 2019b) focussed on the experiences of schools who had participated in the project for more than two years along with detailed feedback from mentors on their experience and the benefits they gained.

The feedback from teachers was collected at a workshop. They following aspects were highlighted:

- In general participation in the project has raised the profile of MFL within their school and improved uptake at GCSE.
- Teachers feel that impact has increased over time.
- Pupils are more aware of the opportunities MFL offers for their future lives and more confident in their language abilities.
- There were also reported impacts on pupils' aspirations (e.g. a visit to the university was important in encouraging this aspect) and parental awareness.
- Schools are participating in other initiatives to increase awareness of the benefits of MFL, including language clubs and talks from invited speakers.

A full discussion of the role of the mentor and the benefits to them can be found in section 8.

4. Methodology

4.1 Data collection

The report authors have been given access to a large amount of primary data sources by the project team. This includes feedback from mentors (particularly from years 3-4), teachers and pupils from across five years of the project from the mentoring training, the mentoring sessions and award and recognition ceremonies. Analysis of this primary data did not form part of previous evaluation reports.

Additional secondary sources were identified to provide further context and allowed comparisons with other subjects and areas within the UK.

Discussions with the members of the project team, described as 'key informants', have been an important part of the data collection.

4.2 Key informants

As Braun, Terry, Gavey and Fenaughty (2009) have described, key informants typically provide, 'in-depth experience and knowledge-based perspectives on under-researched topics' (p.113-114). The key informants (e.g. mentors, teachers, project team) occupy positions 'inside' the MFL Student Mentoring Project and as such, were members of the communities of practice about which they reflected upon.

4.3 Analytical Process

Thematic Analysis (TA) is a method for analysing qualitative data that identifies patterned meaning across a dataset. Braun and Clarke's (2006) articulation of the process has been applied to a variety of disciplines and research areas. The technique has recently been further developed as Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) (Braun & Clarke, 2019) and is described as a subjective, organic and reflexive method of data analysis, where researcher subjectivity is understood as a resource, rather than a barrier to knowledge production. In RTA, researchers actively interpret data and create new meaning through systematic phases of research that are iterative and discursive rather than through the rigid application of a coding framework or codebook. These phases include: (1) data familiarisation; (2) coding the data set; (3) generation of initial themes; (4) reviewing themes; (5) defining and naming themes; and, (6) writing up the analytic narrative in the context of the literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015). Through this dynamic and reflective processes, researchers generate new patterns of shared meaning founded upon a central concept or understanding (Braun & Clarke, 2019). That is, themes do not passively emerge from the data (Ho, Chiang & Leung, 2017).

Following this analytical process, we have reviewed the themes and have provided a summary of impact for various groupings. This has also allowed us to make recommendations for future evaluation of the project and potential avenues of research. The subsequent sections examine each of the themes in detail:

- Project framework.
- University-school partnerships.
- The role of the mentor.

5. Project Framework

At this point in the development of the MFL Student Mentoring project it is important to identify aspects of the implementation and delivery of the project that have contributed to the positive outcomes noted in previous evaluation reports. The following aspects have been identified through the range of data made available to us (see section 4).

These aspects include:

- The project team's clarity of purpose and clear communication with all stakeholders.
- Strong theoretical framework for mentoring which "encourages pupils to be curious about all languages and cultures" (MFL Student Mentoring, 2019) and develops a way of thinking where mentees recognise the importance of being a global citizen and that participation in the project sets them up for a life of learning with languages. This complements the developments being seen with Curriculum for Wales 2022 and the theoretical approach taken by the project directly supports the Language, Literacy and Communication Area of Learning and Experience. This is discussed further in the following section.
- The retention of mentors (and schools) over the life of the project is impressive and suggests that mentors feel valued and that they can make a difference in their mentees' experience of MFL in schools.
- Excellent organisational work that balances demands from different stakeholders and results in a positive outcome for all. This has been demonstrated in the team maintaining a high level of positive outcomes as the project has rapidly scaled up.
- The ability of the project team to recruit mentors who share the vision and aims of the MFL Student Mentoring Project.
- The quality of mentor training in terms of the focus, duration and ongoing support provided to mentors.
- The project team are reflective and open to listening to other peoples' perspectives with the aim of improving the project year on year.
- The project team understand the value of evidence and impact and are diligent in collecting and storing relevant data in an appropriate and ethical manner.
- The strength and depth of project team who are extremely well-informed about the wider MFL context in Wales and how to work with schools and build lasting partnerships.
- The project team understand the wider impact of the project and actively seek to develop the value of the project beyond the stated aims where possible and appropriate e.g. teacher retention and recruitment.

- Between years 1-4 the number of schools increased from 18 to 74 and in this period the team continued to work with a range of schools and maintain a high-quality mentoring experience alongside high conversion rates with the most recent year (2018-19) showing 42% of mentees choosing GCSE MFL, which is higher than the national average.

To consider:

- Further professional development of mentors

Mentors report that a wide range of benefits from their own participation in the MFL Student Mentoring Project (discussed in section 7). Based upon responses from mentors given as part of the end of year survey, we suggest that the professional development of mentors is extended in two ways, (1) include a written reflection for mentors as part of their preparation/de-brief for each of the first and sixth mentoring sessions and, (2) include written resources/in-person session for mentors so that they can identify a range of skills and experiences that they have developed and how these might support their future career plans. In this way, mentors are further supported to identify and apply the benefits of participation in the MFL Student Mentoring Project in the future, for example, sharing with mentors that their work with students and teachers would provide excellent evidence for an application for a PGCE course or highlighting with mentors the value of developing experiences of reflection in a professional context.

> *"The team that have organised the project have been absolutely fantastic, and the project is a real credit to them. They have been patient, understanding, helpful and so much more! I entered into the mentoring scheme because it sounded like a great opportunity and I had no idea how much I would take away from the scheme. I'm so grateful to the team for their tireless efforts to make the scheme as great as it is."*

> Mentor (2018-19)

6. Supporting the new curriculum

Through participation in the project, the vision is for mentees to develop a sense of their place in the wider world, a world which is multi-lingual and multi-cultural. The focus is not on a specific language, nor is there an emphasis on European languages, instead the aim is to give mentees "agency over their language learning and their sense of who they are" (MFL Student Mentoring Project, 2019).

> *"The structure worked well as focuses on languages as a concept and not specifics. This supports all languages and the significance of a language. The facts and ideas were innovative and being able to engage with a mentor was really beneficial."*

Teacher (2018-19)

With regards to the new curriculum, this approach strongly supports the four purposes and specifically the 'What Matters' statements of the Languages, Literacy and Communication (LLC) Area of Leaning and Experience (AoLE) (Welsh Government, 2020).

The current structure of the MFL Student Mentoring Project is that each of the 6 weeks of mentoring have a theme. Mentors develop activities linked to this theme to work through with their mentees. A summary of themes can be found below along with the relevant 'What Matters' statement highlighted.

'What Matters' statement	How themes connect
1. Languages connect us	This links to "Language as identity" (week 1) and "Language as translation" (week 5): Mentees explore how language and culture are connected and are encouraged to think about how translation of words between cultures isn't a simple exercise. This highlights the importance of being aware of other peoples' culture and how that links to their identity.
2. Understanding languages is key to understanding the world around us	These statements connect to "Language as performance" (week 4) as mentees investigate that communication is a performance. "Language as multi" (week 2) is also relevant as mentees discover wider links to careers and how multi-lingualism can positively benefit any future job. The final week of mentoring cement these messages as part of "Language as Journey" where mentees are encouraged to see this experience as the beginning of their own journey as a global citizen.
3. Expressing ourselves through languages is key to communication	
4. Literature fires imagination and inspires creativity	The theme of "Language as Connection" (week 3) supports the development of imagination and creativity as mentees discover how languages provide connections between subjects.

Table 2. How the weekly content connects to the 'What Matters' statements (Welsh Government, 2020; MFL Student Mentoring, Project 2019).

As mentioned, the MFL Student Mentoring Project supports the development of pupils across the four purposes. These are to develop pupils as:

1. ambitious, capable learners ready to learn throughout their lives
2. enterprising, creative contributors ready to play a full part in life and work
3. ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world
4. healthy, confident individuals ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society

(Welsh Government, 2019).

The project approaches the mentoring as the start of a journey and the mentees are supported in seeing this as the beginning of something that they can pursue over the course of their lives. By using themes of performance and translation, mentees are developing skills that will support their ability to "play a full part in life and work". At the heart of the project is the development of mentees as "citizens of Wales and the world" and "valued members of society" who understand the connection between culture and identity along with an understanding of the importance of a multi-lingual approach.

> *"I think the pupils were surprised how many links there were for languages and the wider world, it was great to see them talking and considering languages in a non-classroom context."*

Teacher (2018-19)

Another key aspect of the project is its emphasis on interdisciplinary study, again something that reflects very closely the aims of the new curriculum. In particular, mentors are encouraged to be as interdisciplinary as possible throughout their mentoring sessions.

Taking into account the strong connections to the four purposes and the 'What Matters' statements, this combined with the experience of the project team puts them in an excellent position to develop the approach from this project into a model of practice that can be incorporated into the LLC. This could take the form of a curriculum module to be taken by Key Stage 3 pupils. Development of the module could be undertaken by the project team, with additional training and support being given to teachers to allow successful delivery in schools.

7. University-school partnership

Relationship management is important to any project. Within the MFL Student Mentoring Project the team based at Cardiff University liaise with a number of different stakeholders to successfully manage this project. This section looks at the relationships between the project team, university partners and schools and then further at the roles in school and the support provided to the mentor by the teacher.

7.1 Project team to school

In general, the project team works with the school on recruitment and relationship management throughout the mentoring period. This requires excellent co-ordination, organisation and communication to manage the project.

Liaison takes place with an MFL teacher who is responsible for the selection of students to participate and who then takes on the co-ordination of the mentoring sessions with the mentor.

The feedback from teachers is extremely positive and they regularly cite the high level of organisational skills and communication and support provided. When asked, teachers all confirm that they would participate in the scheme again.

This is also against the context of the team working within a wide range of schools, both in terms of geography and socio-economic deprivation reflected below in the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM). The national average for FSM is 16% (National Stats Wales, 2018).

Year	Number of schools	Free School Meals range (average)
1	18	8.4 – 42.1% (20.7%)
2	53	2.5 – 50.5% (19.1%)
3	66	5.2 – 50.5% (18.7%)
4	74	2.6 – 50.5% (17.5%)

Table 3. Number of schools and percentage of free school meals.

Across the lifetime of the project more than fifty per cent of secondary schools in Wales have participated in one or more years.

7.2 Teacher to mentor

The exact arrangements for mentoring can vary from school to school but in general an MFL teacher will liaise with the mentor over the sessions with their pupils. This is an important

relationship and teachers can find themselves providing support and guidance to mentors in some instances. However, teachers were not asked to reflect on this relationship.

> *"She [the mentor] seemed to be able to lead, support and direct so the preparation must have been excellent."*

<div align="right">Teacher</div>

This aspect is discussed further in section 8, as we would suggest that more information is collected about the teacher experience and this will be able to shed some light on the interaction between teacher and mentor.

7.3 University to school

Based on the evidence reviewed, the award and recognition ceremony is seen by teachers as an important "inspirational" and "motivational" experience for the mentees and something which "fuels" their pupils aspirations.

> *"I think it made university life in general, and languages in particular, seem more accessible".*

<div align="right">Teacher (2018-19)</div>

This is an event that is held at one of the partner universities once a cycle of mentoring has been completed. The day includes *"engaging talks to show pupils that languages "exist" outside the classroom"*.

Not only does this bring the mentees' participation in the project to a climax, it also provides an important opportunity to experience university.

> *Following mentoring pupils had been "talking more about universities and their options for the future."*

<div align="right">Teacher (2018-19)</div>

This interaction becomes more important in the context of declining applications to study MFL at university. Between 2011 and 2017 the number of undergraduates across the UK taking a French degree fell by 45%, German by 43% and Italian by 63% (Bowler, 2020). The consequences of this include reduced numbers going into teaching and research and as all of these numbers fall, Modern Languages departments are threatened with closure. In the ten years from 2007 it was reported that ten departments closed and another nine were reduced in size (Bowler, 2020).

As has occurred in the fields of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM), university departments cannot expect there to be a solution to the issue of dropping application numbers without themselves undertaking some form of intervention. The MFL Student

Mentoring Project exemplifies the approach that universities can take in order to make a contribution to securing a healthy future for MFL. This type of project would ideally be integrated into the university department providing the strongest possible link between schools and universities.

8. The Role of the Mentor

In this section we outline the impact mentors have had in school and the impact the project has had on the mentors as individuals.

In terms of their relationship with the mentees, the mentors have acted as a role model. They have shared their own personal experiences of how languages have contributed to their lives and the opportunities that have opened up to them.

> *"Pupils benefit from meeting and establishing a relationship with the mentor with whom they can identify/relate to."*
>
> Teacher (2017-18)

The relationship between the mentor and mentee is key to the success of the project and teachers regularly highlighted the mentors in the feedback they gave:

> *"Great mentors – very committed"*
>
> Teacher (2017-18)

> [The mentor] *"built a wonderful relationship with our students"*
>
> Teacher (2017-18)

The mentor as a role model was reported to have been especially important in schools located in areas of economic disadvantage where pupils are not very likely to travel abroad or to go to university. One teacher sums up the impact mentors have had in terms of aspirations:

> *"Our pupils are from the economically disadvantaged Valleys and as such a lot of them would be the first member of their family to go to university. It was great for them to see that university is a real option for them and that travelling the world is open to all of them."*
>
> Teacher (2017-18)

Mentors themselves reported on the satisfaction of *"Portraying to the pupils the wider world outside of their town"* and having *"a chance to engage with Welsh speakers from various background and encourage them to look beyond their boundaries".* One in particular said that they will miss *"Talking about languages and helping young people broaden their cultural knowledge."*

This is an important outcome for the mentors, as sharing their personal experience of the benefits languages bring was a key motivator for them to apply to the MFL Student Mentoring Project in the first instance. Other key reasons included being able to share their passion for languages and encourage more young people to take it at GCSE.

When we consider the impacts the project has had on the mentors themselves, there is a wealth of evidence from multiple sources (including Tinsley, 2019b) to show:

- Development of transferable skills, including communication skills, time management, organisational skills, leadership.
- Improved confidence.
- The value of experiencing an environment outside of the *"university bubble"*, visiting other areas of Wales and being able to apply what they are learning in their degree programme.

> *"Mentoring has added to my confidence. These transferable skills will come in useful for my future."*
>
> Mentor (2018-19)

> *"I was so nervous going into the project as I was quite a shy person and not very good at public speaking. Now, having done mentoring for two academic years, I feel more confident in myself and my abilities. This new positive mental attitude has really helped me in my personal and professional life, and I cannot thank the mentoring team enough."*
>
> Mentor (2018-19)

A large proportion of the mentor cohorts express an interest in teaching as a career: for example, in the 2017-18 cycle 61% of mentors reported that they were considering a career in teaching. This experience in schools is extremely valuable as it gives them the opportunity to understand more about what teaching involves and whether or not it is something that they enjoy. By offering this opportunity to mentors this contributes more widely to supporting the recruitment of MFL teachers. This is discussed further in section 8. There were some mentors who reported that since participating in the project their improved confidence meant that they were more likely to consider a career in education than they had previously.

A further positive aspect of the mentoring experience was that of being able to experience and integrate into the wider Welsh community and culture. For those mentors who were from England or elsewhere, they reported that their experience in working in schools and with Welsh speakers introduced them to Welsh heritage and made them feel part of the community.

Mentors returned to the project year after year and some continued to work for the project in other capacities. This shows the impact of a positive mentoring experience. Summarising, one mentor commented:

> *"Mentoring is something that will bring you a lot of happiness and also confidence. From doing mentoring you will also feel fulfilled and proud as you will be changing languages' future within schools. Overall it's a rewarding experience!"*
>
> Mentor (2017-18)

9. Recommendations for future MFL Student Mentoring Project evaluation.

   a. Role of the teacher and benefits to them

To date, evaluations of the MFL Student Mentoring Project have not considered the role of the teacher and the benefits of their participation in the project on their sense of professional identity and continuing professional development. From our experience of evaluating a similar mentoring project (Physics Mentoring Project, Cardiff University) and working with teachers who mentor school students in STEM research (Rushton & Reiss, 2019; Walkington & Rushton, 2019) we suggest that this is an area that can be simply and efficiently incorporated into future evaluations via some additional questions that ask teachers to consider their role in the project and their professional identity as a teacher of MFL and a linguist. Future evaluation could also consider the ways in which teachers' interaction with the project team and the mentor have furthered their professional development and identity, and support teachers to consider how they might be able to link this to performance management targets or department development plans. This is particularly important in the context of the introduction of the new curriculum.

In addition to this, there will be support that teachers are providing to mentors in some cases and it is important to capture this interaction, as this could contribute to the mentor's decision whether or not to continue in a teaching career.

   b. Teacher recruitment and retention

Understanding the experiences of teachers who participate in the MFL Student Mentoring Project is important and timely given the challenging UK context of teacher recruitment and retention (particularly MFL specialists) in a number of countries including England (Foster, 2018), Scotland (Scottish Parliament, 2017), Wales and Northern Ireland (Davis et al., 2016).

Data from the UK Government's Initial Teacher Training Census in England, for 2019-2020 highlights the continued under-recruitment of MFL teachers, with only 62% recruited compared to the target, falling from 88% in 2018-19 (Department for Education, 2019b)

MFL Teacher Retention is also challenging in Wales. In the period January – December 2018, 13 MFL teachers left the profession. During the same period 22 MFL posts were advertised, of which 19 vacancies were filled (StatsWales, 2019).

Qualitative data from mentor responses suggests that their experience of mentoring enabled them to make informed decisions regarding future careers in teaching. The absence of evidence of the impact on teachers means that we can at this stage only speculate as to the potential affordances of the MFL Student Mentoring Project and teacher retention. We suggest that future evaluations might consider capturing more systematically both the ways in which

the MFL Student Mentoring Project supports MFL teacher recruitment through mentors and teacher retention through teachers based in partner schools. These findings can then be considered alongside recent evaluations of MFL Teacher Supply and Recruitment programmes (Department for Education, 2019a).

c. Exploring demographic profiles of mentees

From the data collected as part of Language Trends Wales (2019) it appears as if there is a correlation between socio-economic status and uptake of MFL GCSE. Students who are eligible for free school meals, are less likely to study MFL at GCSE (Board & Tinsley, 2016; Tinsley, 2018; Tinsley, 2019a). For those that choose not to take MFL GCSE, more analysis could be done to understand the barriers and students' attitudes and aspirations.

In addition to socio-economic status, there are appears to be gender disparities in the uptake of MFL where there is an over-representation of girls (Tinsley, 2018). Further work can be done to understand this aspect.

10. Potential areas for future academic research.

During this review, we have identified two areas for further research that, although are potentially beyond the scope of the MFL project, may prove fruitful for future academic research e.g. Masters' and/or PhD theses. These areas are in addition to those previously highlighted that are closely linked to the project for example, teacher recruitment and retention.

a. As discussed, the project's theoretical framework directly complements the Curriculum for Wales 2022 (Welsh Government, 2020). An area for further investigation would be how to integrate international languages in the new curriculum and how projects such as this one can support the roll-out of the new curriculum.

b. Another aspect that is key to the future health of MFL uptake in Wales, is identifying what the successful strategies are for building school-university partnerships which go from primary through to higher education.

c. Further exploration of the *impact of the "bilingual plus one policy" on the uptake of MFL at GCSE.* This policy has been introduced within a context of reduced option choices at GCSE (Tinsley, 2018) and, since 2015, a move towards pupils taking fewer GCSEs in general (Burgess and Thomson, 2019). Future research could consider the ways in which the introduction of this policy has shaped the attitudes, beliefs and values of students and their parents and teachers towards studying MFL at GCSE level and beyond.

d. As part of the review process, one recurring theme amongst mentor feedback was that those who were from England or elsewhere found *the mentoring experience promoted their integration into Welsh communities.* In particular, mentors cited the increased knowledge of Welsh myths and legends and the importance of the Welsh language to the community. There are opportunities to collect additional information from mentors before they embark on mentoring through focussed interviews. If this is of interest, we could collate the relevant data for review.

11. References

Board, K, and Tinsley, T. (2016) *Language trends Wales 2015/2016 – the state of language learning in primary and secondary schools in Wales.* Available: https://wales.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language_trends_wales_2016_english_0.pdf [Accessed: 20 December 2019].

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019. Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 11*(4), 589-597.

Braun, V., Terry, G., Gavey, N., & Fenaughty, J. (2009) 'Risk' and sexual coercion among gay and bisexual men in Aotearoa/New Zealand–key informant accounts. *Culture, Health & Sexuality, 11*(2), 111-124.

BESA (2020) *Key UK Education Statistics.* Available: https://www.besa.org.uk/key-uk-education-statistics/ [Accessed 13 January 2020]

Burgess, S., & Thomson, D. (2019) Making the Grade: the impact of GCSE reforms on the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. The Sutton Trust. Retrieved from: https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/34684/1/Sutton%20Trust.pdf [Accessed: 20 December 2019]

Clarke, V., Braun, V., & Hayfield, N. (2015) Thematic Analysis. In J.A. Smith (Ed). *Qualitative Psychology: A Practical Guide to Research Methods*. London: Sage. (pp. 222-248).

Chambers, G. (2019) Pupils' perceptions of Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 transition in modern foreign languages. *The Language Learning Journal*, *47*(1), 19-33.

Davies, P., Connolly, M., Nelson, J., Hulme, M., Kirkman, J., & Greenway, C. (2016). 'Letting the right one in': Provider contexts for recruitment to initial teacher education in the United Kingdom. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *60*, 291–302.

Department for Education (2019a) *Evaluation of MFL/STEM Teacher Supply and Recruitment Programmes: Findings.* Research Report, June 2019. Available: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/807853/STEM-MFL_report_June_2019.pdf [Accessed: 4 December 2019]

Department for Education (2019b*) Initial Teacher Training Census 2019-2020 for England*. Available: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/848851/ITT_Census_201920_Main_Text_final.pdf [Accessed: 4 December 2019]

Foster, D. (2018) *Teacher recruitment and retention in England.* (House of Commons Briefing Paper No. 7222). Available: https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7222. 4 December 2019 [Accessed 20 December 2019]

Graham, S.J. (2004) Giving up on modern foreign languages? Students' perceptions of learning French. *The Modern Language Journal 88*(2), 171-191.

Bowler, M. (2020) *A Languages Crisis?* Higher Education Policy Institute. Available: https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/HEPI_A-Languages-Crisis_Report-123-FINAL.pdf [Accessed 13 January 2020]

Ho, K. H., Chiang, V. C., & Leung, D. (2017) Hermeneutic phenomenological analysis: the 'possibility' beyond 'actuality' in thematic analysis. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 73*(7), 1757-1766.

MFL Student Mentoring Project. (2019) *Raising The Profile Of (Modern Foreign) Languages: Handbook for Student Mentors 2019-2020.* Unpublished.

National Stats Wales (2018) *Provision of meals and milk.* Available: https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Schools-and-Teachers/Schools-Census/Pupil-Level-Annual-School-Census/Provision-of-Meals-and-Milk [Accessed 14 January 2020]

Rushton, E.A.C. & Reiss, M.J. (2019a). From science teacher to 'teacher scientist': Exploring the experiences of research-active science teachers in the UK. *International Journal of Science Education 41*(11) 1541-1561. doi.org/10.1080/09500693.2019.1615656

Scottish Parliament (2017). *Teacher workforce planning for Scotland's schools.* (SP Paper No.186). Edinburgh: Education and Skills Committee. Available: https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/Committees/Report/ES/2017/9/1/Teacher-Workforce-Planning-for-Scotland-s-Schools#Summary-of-Conclusions-and-Recommendations. [Accessed: 4 December 2019]

Stats Wales. (2019) *Teacher Recruitment.* Available: https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Schools-and-Teachers/teachers-and-support-staff/Teacher-Recruitment-and-Retention/teacherrecruitmentappointments-by-subject-year [Accessed: 4 December 2019]

Tinsley, T. (2017) *Raising the profile of MFL mentoring initiative.* Available: https://mflmentoring.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/External-Evaluators-Report-Oct-2017.pdf [Accessed: 4 December 2019]

Tinsley, T. 2018. *Language trends Wales 2018 – the state of language learning in secondary schools in*

Wales. Available: https://wales.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/tueddiadau_ieithoedd_yng_nghymru_2018.pdf [Accessed: 20 December 2019].

Tinsley, T. (2017) *Language trends 2017: language teaching in primary and secondary schools in England.* Available:

https://wales.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language_trends_wales_2016-17_0.pdf [Accessed 4 December 2019].

Tinsley, T. and Doležal, N. 2018. Language trends 2018: language teaching in primary and secondary schools in England. Available:

https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/language_trends_2018_report.pdf [Accessed 4 December 2019]

Tinsley, T. (2018) *Digi-mentoring project 2018 Evaluation report.* Available:

https://mflmentoring.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Digimentoring-evaluation-report-July-18.docx [Accessed 4 December 2019].

Tinsley, T. (2019a) *Language trends Wales 2019: international languages in primary and secondary schools in*

Wales. Available: https://wales.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/tueddiadau_ieithoedd_yng_nghymru_2018.pdf [Accessed: 20 December 2019].

Tinsley, T. (2019b) *Longitudinal review of MFL student mentoring project.* Unpublished.

Walkington, H. & Rushton, E.A.C. (2019) Ten salient practices for mentoring student research in schools: new opportunities for teacher professional development. *Higher Education Studies.* DOI: 10.5539/hes. v9n4p133

Welsh Government. (2018) *GCSE entries and results (pupils in Year 11/pupils aged 15) by subject group and gender.* Available: https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Schools-and-Teachers/Examinations-and-Assessments/Key-Stage-4/gcseentriesandresultspupilsaged15only-by-subjectgroup-gender [Accessed 16 December 2019].

Welsh Government. (2020) *Curriculum for Wales 2022.* Available: https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/languages-literacy-and-communication/statements-of-what-matters/ [Accessed 05 February 2020].

Ondata Research