

**From:** Cocks, Ruth (UK Region) <[Ruth.Cocks@britishcouncil.org](mailto:Ruth.Cocks@britishcouncil.org)>

**Sent:** 18 November 2024 16:10

**To:** Jewell, Delyth (Aelod o'r Senedd | Member of the Senedd)

<[Delyth.Jewell@senedd.wales](mailto:Delyth.Jewell@senedd.wales)>

**Subject:** Language Trends Wales Research 2024 - Embargoed until November 19th at 16.00

Dear Delyth,

I am writing to you as Chair of the Committee for Culture and International Relations. Tomorrow, we launch our latest research on international language learning in Wales. The report is **under embargo** until **16.00 on November 19<sup>th</sup> (tomorrow) but I wanted to share with you the report in advance given your role to support an international outlook for Wales.** We are issuing a press release in the early hours of tomorrow with a headline on a 'Lost Generation of Language Learners in Wales.

Of note:

1. The trend is one of **decline of international language learning across Wales in secondary schools**– this is in line with trends we map in England and Northern Ireland too. Scotland are doing this research for the first time this year.
2. At primary level, thanks to the new Curriculum for Wales' **introduction of mandatory international language learning showed in last year's results, an upward trend.** We have left this a year (so not available in this year's report) to see if this upward trend continues. We won't be clear for a number of year if this then impacts uptake at secondary level in a positive way.
3. This is the **ten-year anniversary of the research** so we have ten years of data. Over the ten years, we can see that:
  - a. Entries in GCSE French and German have **more than halved in schools in Wales.**
  - b. **Spanish has reduced by 25%.**
  - c. In addition, the number of entries for GCSE German is now so low that **we risk having almost no German language courses at all** - a particular concern given Germany is our third largest trading partner.
  - d. We aren't seeing a trend whereby Mandarin or Arabic or other non-European languages are taking over. The picture is just one of decline overall.
4. The **Lost Generation** headline represents all of the above – a similar sentiment to the loss of EU programmes following the UK's exit from the UK, as well as the fact that there could be up to 200-300 pupils in Wales who do want to take languages but because the numbers in their school are so low, the school can't justify it. So those few **miss out completely.** This might be 2-3 per schools but the multiplier effect of that across Wales add up to 200 + pupils who might be denied taking a language. A useful action could be to **map provision across Wales.** Schools during Covid, pooled resources and this could be something to consider
5. There are **multiple reasons for the decline** (we don't report on pupil voice but there is other research that does and things like perceived difficulty of exams, and not seeing a career pathway come up) and therefore multiple potential actions.

Happy to talk through any time and it would be great if there are other members we should consider sending this to directly.

Also worth mentioning we are part of a session at the **Senedd on December 4<sup>th</sup> 12.00-13.30**, at the Senedd, comprising of 3 research presentations by the MFL Mentoring Project (who cover pupil voice), ourselves and authors of a recent PolicyWise briefing. It would be great if you and other Senedd Members could make it particularly those on the Culture Committee.

Best wishes,

Ruth

**Ruth Cocks** | Country Director Wales  
British Council | 1 Kingsway | Cardiff CF10 3AQ  
T: +44 (0)7561807185  
[ruth.cocks@britishcouncil.org](mailto:ruth.cocks@britishcouncil.org)  
Twitter: @RuthyCocks

**[www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)**  
Creating opportunity worldwide

**Ruth Cocks** | Cyfarwyddwr Gwlad, Cymru  
British Council | 1 Ffordd y Brenin | Caerdydd CF10 3AQ  
T: +44 (0)7561807185  
[ruth.cocks@britishcouncil.org](mailto:ruth.cocks@britishcouncil.org)  
Twitter: @RuthyCocks

**[www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)**  
Creu cyfleoedd yn fyd-eang