

# Modern Languages Student Mentoring Project

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The Modern Languages Student Mentoring project was launched in 2015. It places undergraduates from Cardiff, Swansea, Bangor and Aberystwyth universities into local schools to mentor pupils and encourage them to choose modern languages for GCSE. The project is funded by Welsh Government and is part of its five-year 'Global Futures' strategy. It aims to improve the take up of modern languages in secondary schools at a time of great challenge in Wales.

The number of Welsh pupils studying a foreign language to GCSE has rapidly declined since 2001, from 48% to just around 20% in 2016. A quarter of schools in Wales currently having fewer than 10% of pupils taking modern languages in Year 10.

To date, the project has worked with 1004 secondary school pupils and 57 schools (28% of all secondary schools in Wales). In Phase one, 57% of the total number of pupils mentored chose to take modern languages at GCSE. In Phase two (with more school partners) this number was 50%. These represent significant increases compared to the national picture in which uptake at GCSE is around 20%. In Phase two, only 158 (29%) of 868 mentees had originally said they would take modern languages in pre-mentoring surveys, but an additional 187 pupils decided to do so after the intervention. In three of the four Welsh regional education consortia, the number of pupils mentored choosing modern languages at GCSE has more than doubled, and in one case nearly tripled. There are four schools taking part that are now running a modern languages GCSE group for the first time in several years.

All pupils, especially those from disadvantaged areas, have benefitted from personal contact with university students who have recent experience of living abroad and represent a range of global experiences. The opportunity to visit universities for Award and Recognition ceremonies, organised at each of the participating universities, has stimulated pupil ambitions. The project has addressed the challenge of building confidence and resilience among modern language learners and been praised by teachers.



Carly Taylor Cardiff University Undergraduate in German and Spanish mentors pupils from Bryn Hafren Comprehensive School, Barry



Cardiff University Student Mentors





St Martin's School Caerphilly receiving certificate from Professor Claire Gorrara, Cardiff University



Dylan Thomas School, Swansea, visit Swansea University



Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kirsty Williams, takes part in a mentoring session at Bryn Hafren Comprehensive School and writes: 'Through Government funding, I've been pleased to note the success of the MFL Student Mentoring Project in particular and its positive impact on school pupils and undergraduate students. I am keen to see the development of such partnership approaches in other disciplines. I would expect to see universities recognise the benefits of such civic engagement by working together and delivering further investments of their own'