

Language Trends Scotland 2024/25

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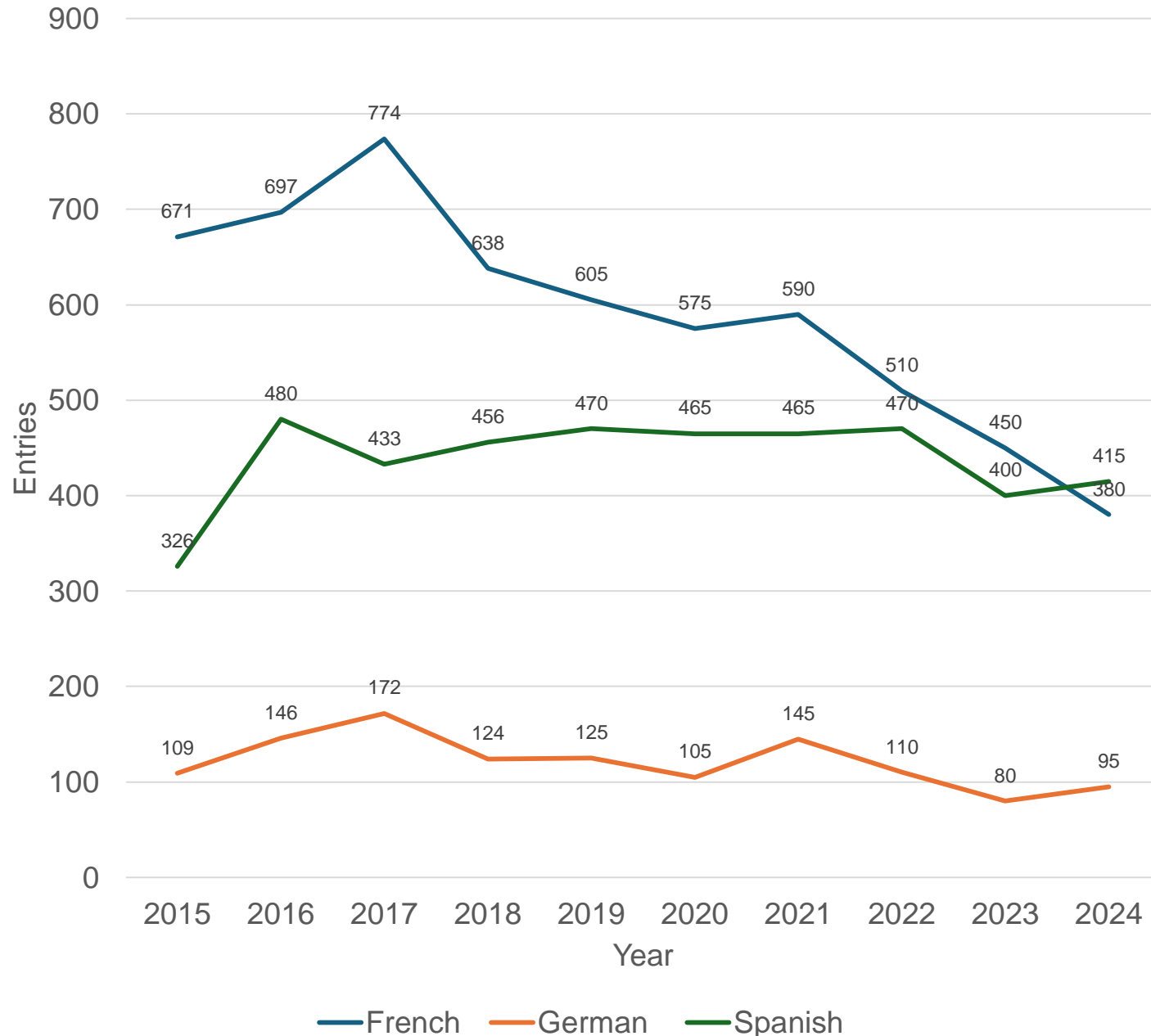
Language Trends Scotland 2024/25

In collaboration with an expert panel, we created 3 surveys that asked questions about the current situation for language teaching and learning in Scotland. Surveys were sent out via email using the publicly available database of schools.

- Primary survey (local authority and independent);
- Local authority secondary school survey;
- Independent secondary school survey.



Advanced Higher Entries in French, German and Spanish 2015-2024



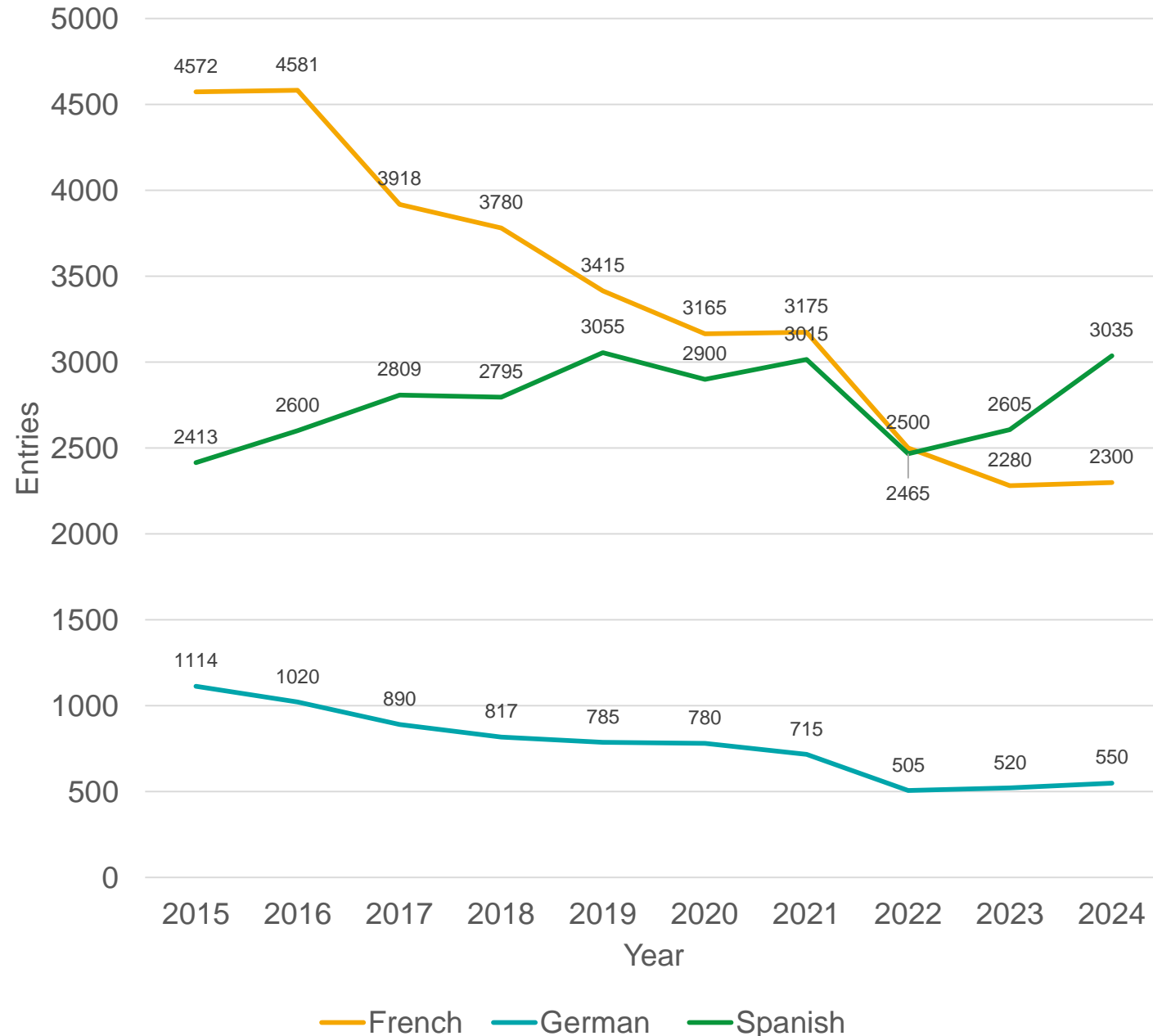
Public examination figures – Advanced Higher

German and Spanish entries have increased in 2024, while French has decreased by 70 entries since 2023.

In 2024, Spanish was the most popular language at both Higher and Advanced Higher, where it has overtaken French.

Spanish is now the most popular language at all levels of the Senior Phase (S4-S6).

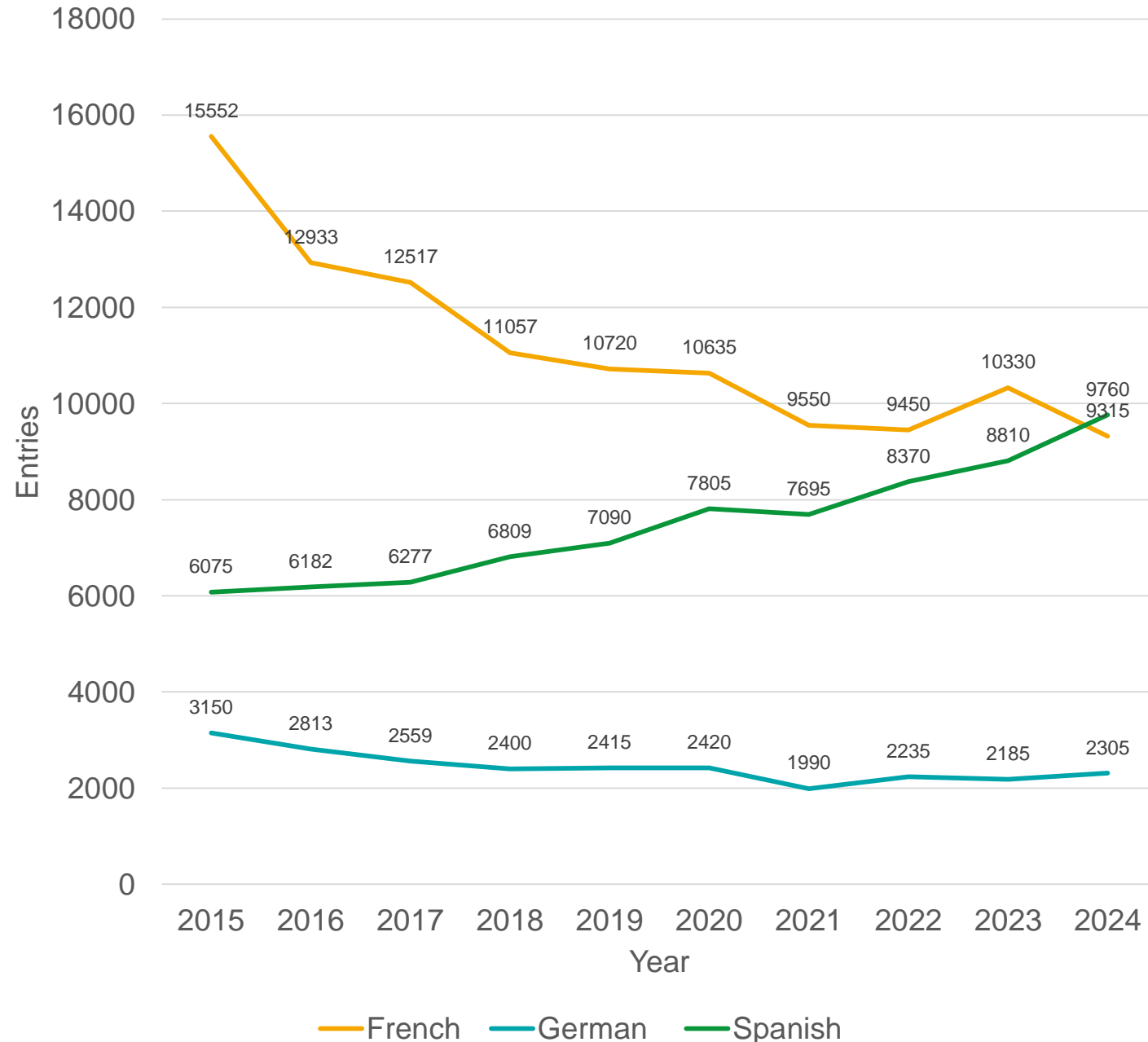
Higher Entries in French, German and Spanish 2015-2024



Public examination figures – Higher

Higher entries in French, German and Spanish have increased in 2024; in particular, Spanish entries have risen considerably with an increase of 430 entries since 2023 (see figure 2 and table 5 for raw data).

Below Higher (i.e. National 2 - National 5 combined) Entries
in French, German and Spanish 2015-2024



Public examination figures – Below Higher

There has been a steep decline in Below Higher entries in French since 2023, while Spanish has steadily increased in entries since 2015.

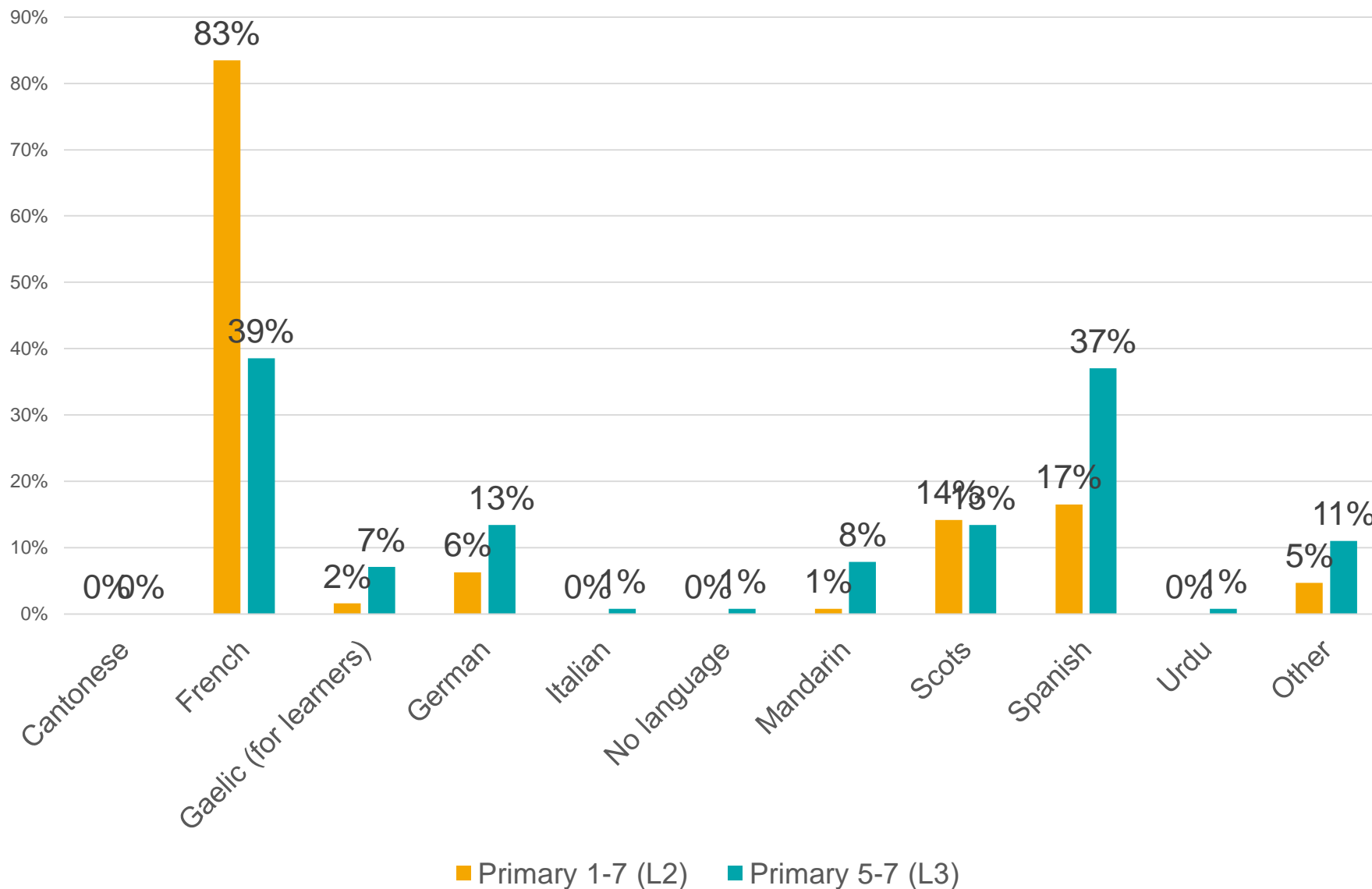
We see 'green shoots' with Below Higher German entries

Local authority primary school findings

- Responses from 129 primary schools in 29/32 local authorities (8% response rate, email invite delivered to 1,524 schools);
- Links to participate also distributed on BC Scotland social media channels.



Which languages does your school teach as part of the school day?



Curricular languages taught in primary schools

French is the most taught language for L2.

Other languages:
BSL, Arabic,
Japanese, Polish.

Who provides language teaching?	Mainly	Occasionally
Classroom teacher	94%	5%
Specialist language teacher based in the school	10%	11%
Peripatetic specialist language teacher	2%	9%
Teacher(s) from local secondary school	2%	12%
Teacher provided by a cultural institute	2%	3%
Student teacher	1%	5%
Teaching staff from transition visits/projects	1%	10%
Modern Language Assistant	0%	2%
S6 learner	0%	5%
Volunteer parent	0%	8%
Community volunteer groups	0%	2%
We don't offer language teaching	0%	1%

Who teaches primary languages?

Primary languages taught mainly by a classroom teacher (94% of schools);

Teachers from a local secondary school (in 12% of responding schools) or a specialist language teacher (in 11% of responding schools) will occasionally deliver language lessons;

Just over 40% reported that their language teachers do not have a language qualification of any kind.

Time for languages in primary schools

	Primary						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
No time	2%	2%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Less than 30 minutes	34%	31%	20%	13%	7%	6%	6%
30 minutes to one hour	42%	46%	56%	60%	57%	54%	54%
More than one hour but less than 90 minutes	4%	4%	6%	11%	16%	17%	18%
90 minutes to two hours	0%	0%	0%	0%	8%	9%	8%
More than two hours	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	2%
We embed languages into the curriculum and general class time	20%	20%	20%	18%	19%	18%	19%
I don't know	3%	3%	4%	3%	2%	3%	2%

- the total amount of class time per week allocated for language learning;
- between 42 and 60 % cent teach languages for 30 minutes to one hour;
- A fifth embed languages into the curriculum.

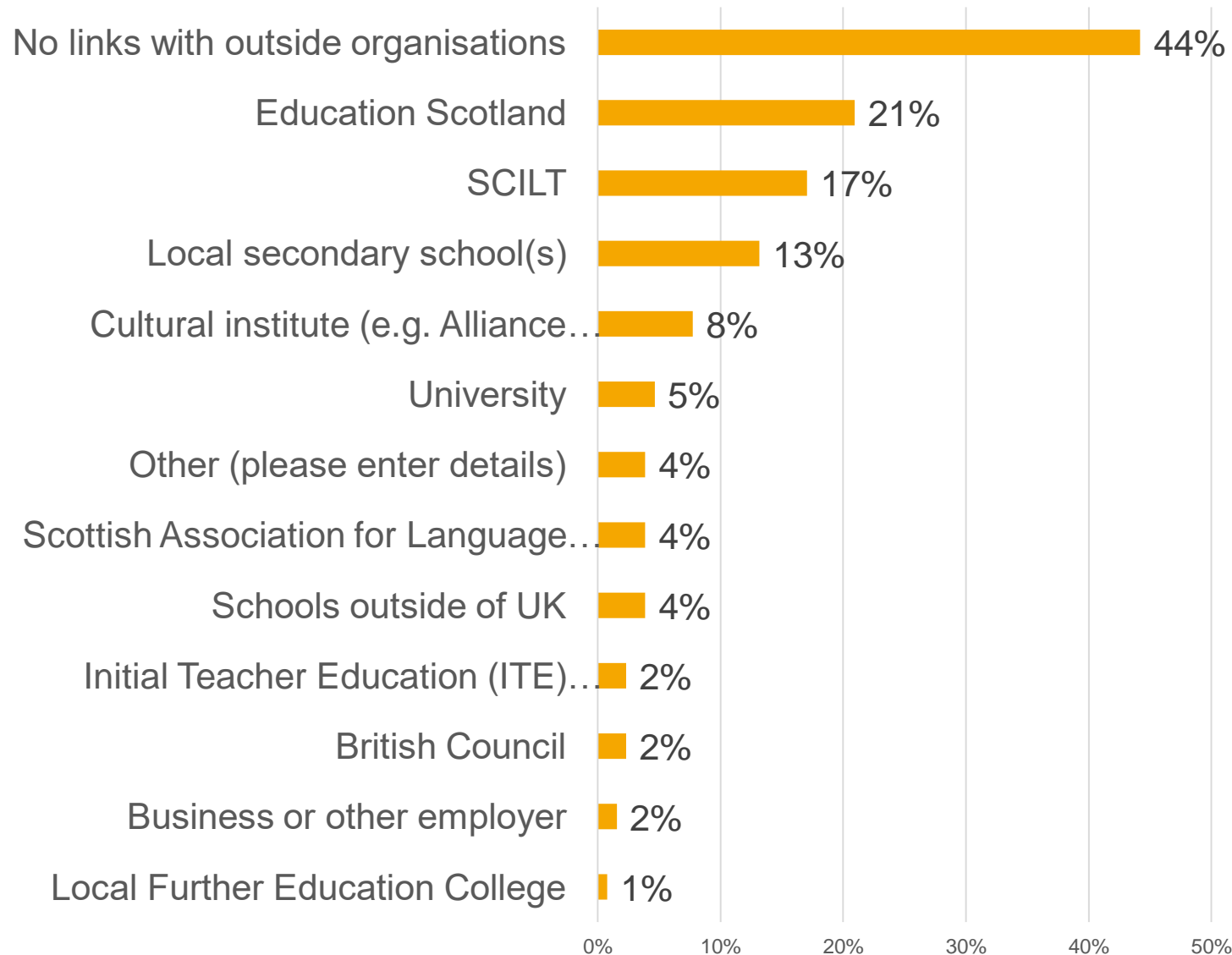
Type of contact	Raw figure	%
We exchange information on language teaching informally	36	47%
We take part in network/cluster meetings	35	45%
We provide information on learner progress in language learning at the point of transfer to S1	33	43%
L2 and L3 language classes are taught in our local secondary school	15	19%
A local secondary school provides language teaching in my school	11	14%
Other (please specify)	8	10%
A local secondary school provides training for teachers of languages in my school	7	9%
We collaborate on planning units of work in languages	7	9%
A local secondary school provides our scheme of work	4	5%
We plan language lessons together	3	4%
We observe each other's lessons	0	0%

Language learning clusters and primary schools

60% of responding schools are in contact with a local authority secondary school within their cluster in relation to language learning.

In those schools with contact with a secondary school (n=77), just less than half exchange information on language teaching informally and take part in network/cluster meetings.

Do you have links with any outside organisations to promote language learning? (tick all that apply)



International dimension in primary schools

44 per cent of responding schools have no links with outside organisations.

The cultural institutes that schools have links with included: Confucius Institute, Consejería de Educación, Goethe-Institut and Institut Français.

We asked schools what opportunities existed for international engagement in their school; **67% said none.**

Local authority secondary school findings

- Responses from 113 local authority secondary schools (excellent response rate of 34%);
- Links to participate also distributed on BC Scotland social media channels.
- FSM profile: 50% of responding schools in quintiles 1 and 2 (least deprived)



Language	S1 all learners	S1 some learners	S2 all learners	S2 some learners	S3 all learners	S3 some learners
Cantonese	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
French	75%	18%	72%	21%	12%	74%
Gàidhlig (fluent)	1%	8%	1%	7%	1%	8%
Gaelic (Learners)	4%	6%	3%	7%	0%	9%
German	12%	17%	12%	20%	4%	35%
Italian	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	4%
Mandarin (Simplified and/or Traditional)	2%	4%	2%	5%	0%	4%
Scots	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Spanish	46%	11%	59%	16%	15%	67%
Urdu	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%
No language	0%	4%	0%	4%	1%	6%
Other	0%	3%	0%	2%	0%	3%

Which language(s) are your learners learning in S1-S3 as part of the normal school day?

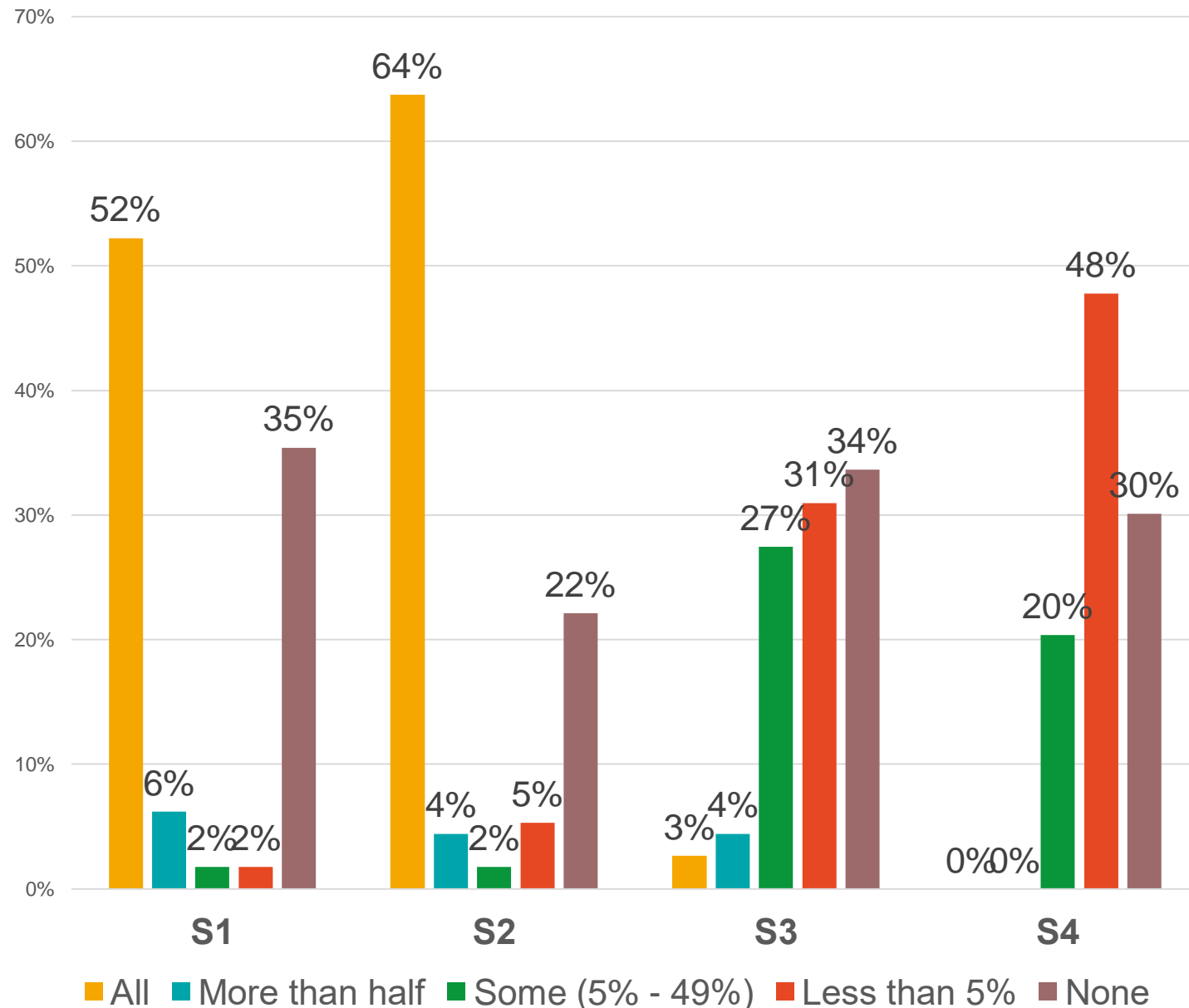
Language teaching and learners S1-S3

In the majority of responding schools, French is the most taught language in S1 and S2, taught to all learners in over 70% of schools.

Spanish is the second most taught language, taught to all learners in 46% of schools in S1, and 59% in S2. This is followed by German, taught to all learners in 12% of responding schools in S1 and S2.

By S3, there is a significant decrease in the number of schools reporting that all their learners are studying a language as part of the school day.

What proportion of the cohort in each year group in your school is studying MORE THAN ONE LANGUAGE?



Learner numbers S1-4

S1 and S2 have the highest figure of **all** learners studying **more than one language**; by S4, the figure is zero.

There is a big drop in the number of learners overall between S2 and S3; in over 60% of schools, there are less than 5% or no learners studying more than one language at S3.

What is your school's approach to take-up for languages in S4? Tick all which apply.

The school runs multi-level classes	64%
The school runs bi-level classes	55%
Timetabling means that not all learners are able to take a language	55%
Classes do not run if there are not enough learners	52%
Some learners may be advised by guidance teachers not to take a language	46%
Classes run regardless of low learner numbers	26%
Lower than average attaining learners are discouraged from choosing a language	12%
The school strongly recommends that all learners take a language	9%
Other (please specify)	8%
The school offers online provision for learning a language through e-Sgoil	4%
All learners MUST take a language	3%
The school strongly recommends that the most academically able take a language	1%

School approaches to take-up for languages at S4

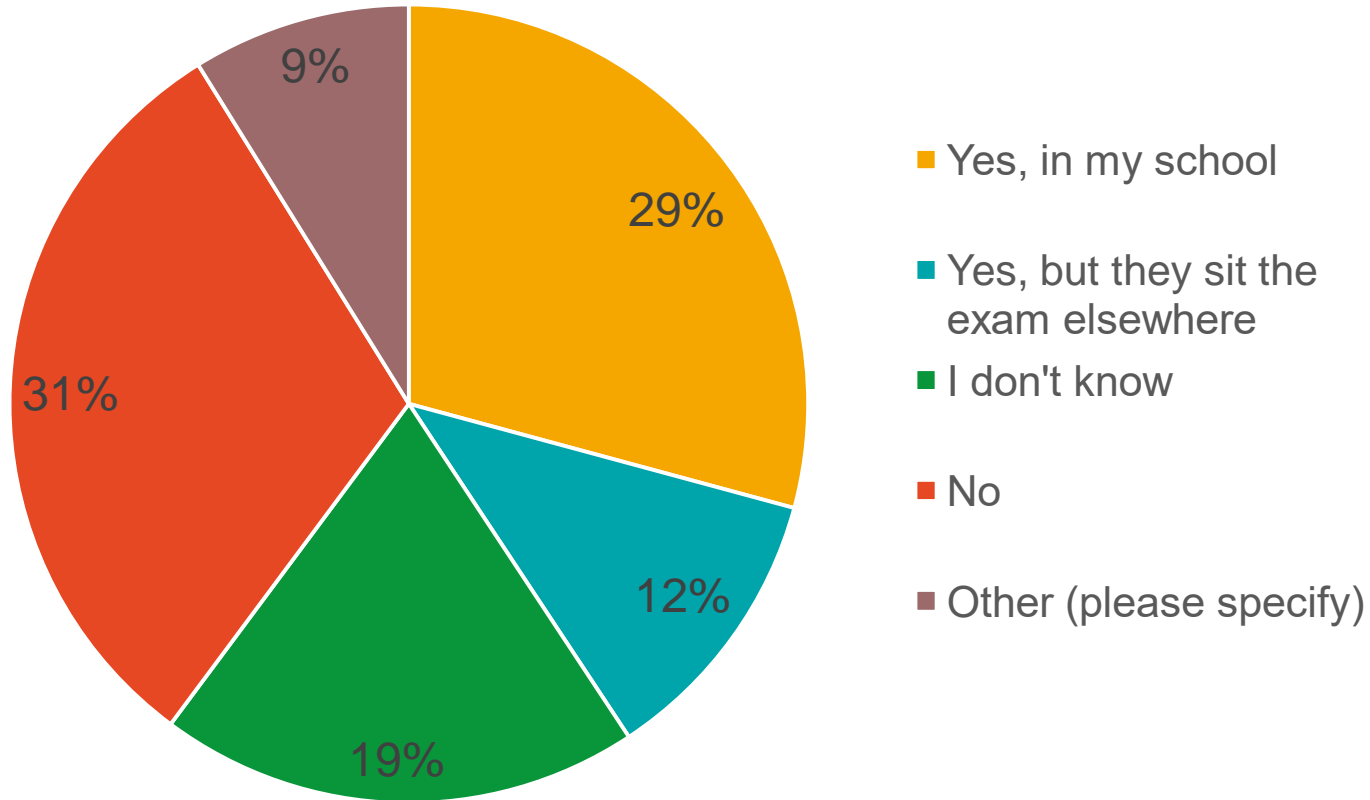
High reported figure of schools running multi-level classes.

In 'other' comments, respondents noted the following:

"Some learners are advised by guidance teachers to take a language when they do not have the aptitude or willingness to try. This causes issues with multilevel classes - last year we had 5 levels in one class, from N3 to Advanced Higher which was very hard to teach."

"Some learners are advised by school career advisors not to take a language."

Do any of your learners have opportunities to take exams in the languages spoken in their homes or communities (other than those taught in your school)?



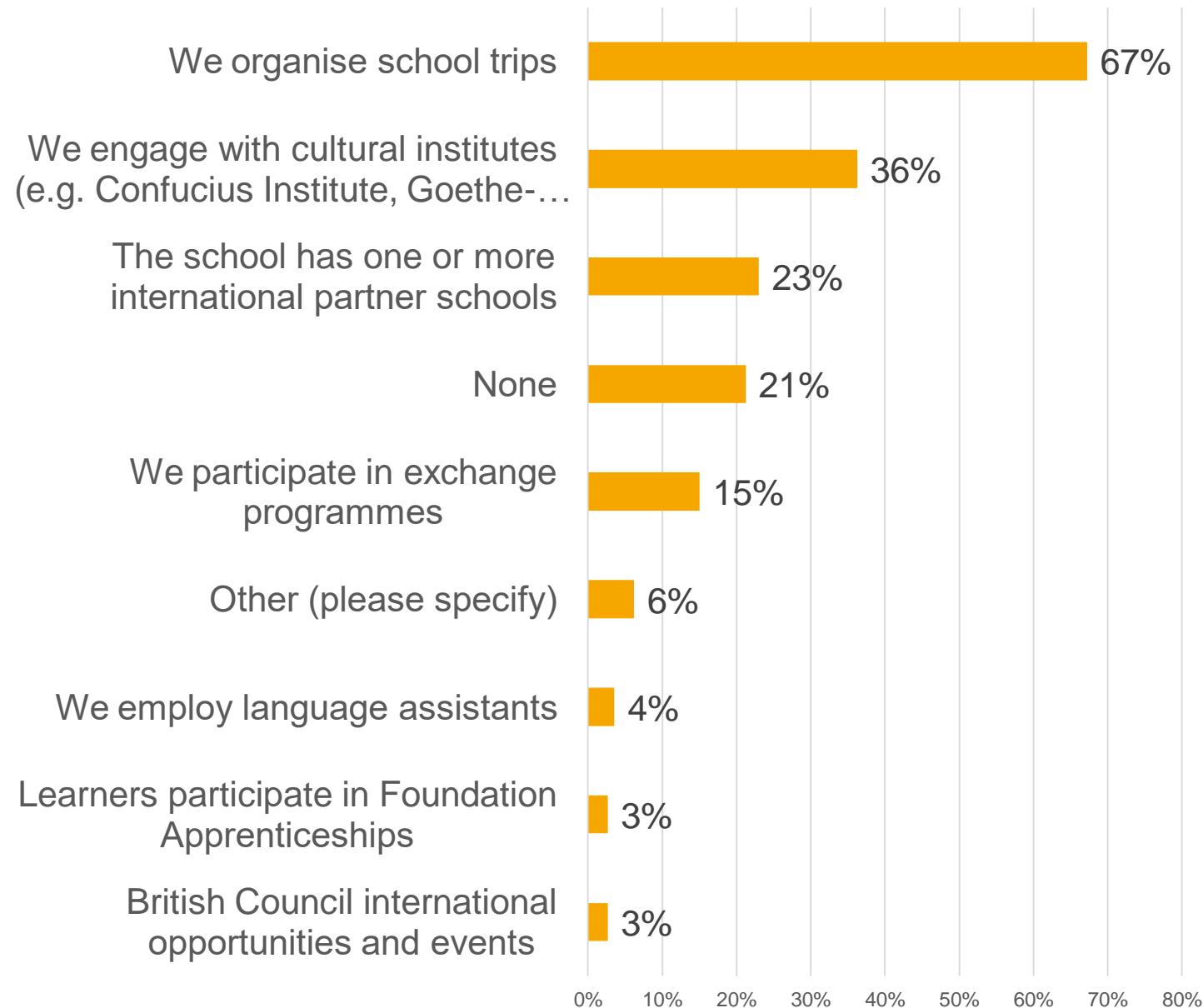
Home and community languages

A mixed picture on learner opportunities to take exams in the languages spoken in their homes/communities.

Other comments:

Not yet, being considered; depends on the languages and school capacity; use their own provision.

What opportunities are there for learners and/or teachers in your school to gain international experience? (tick all that apply)



International dimension in secondary schools

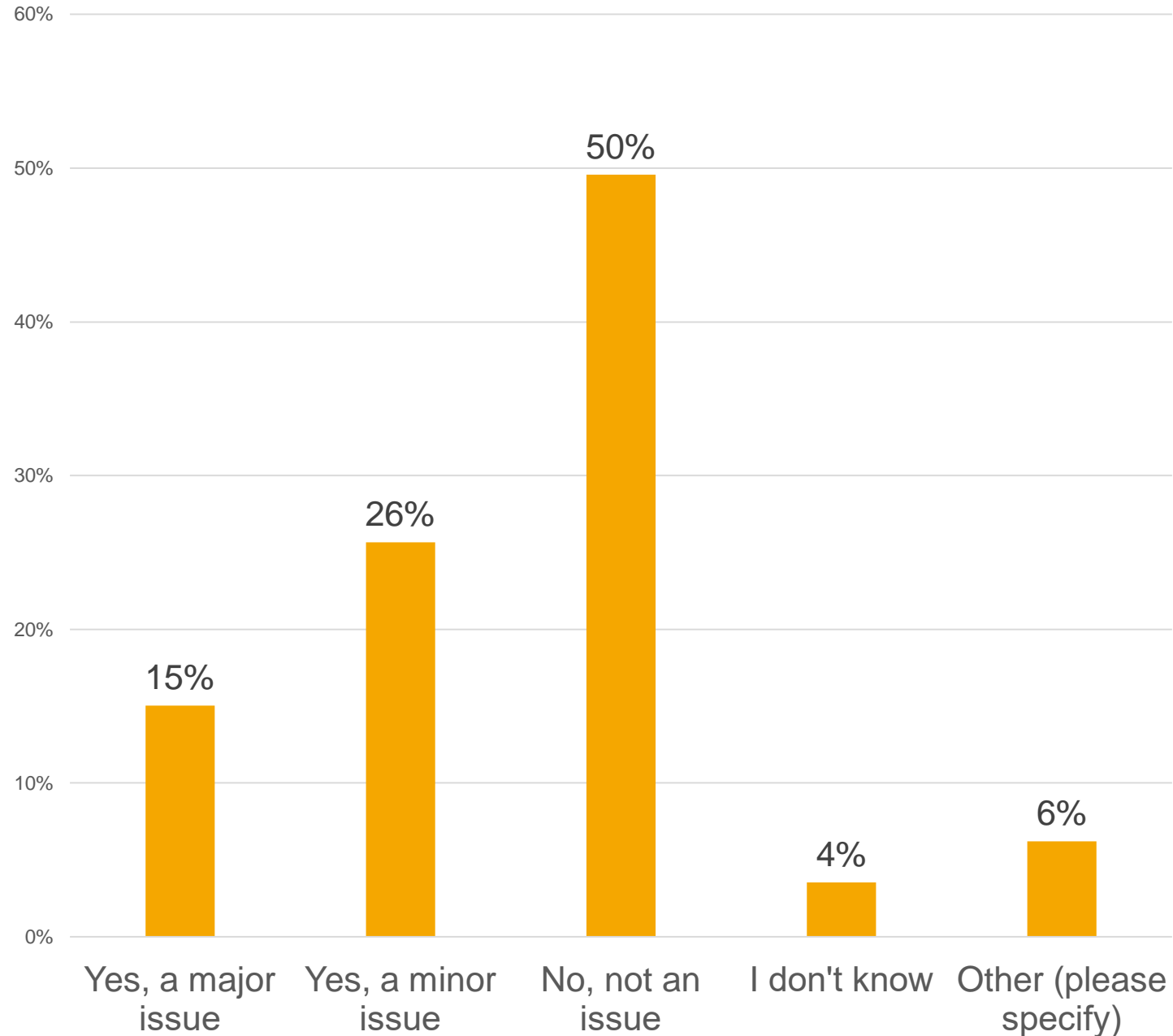
Good level of engagement – 67% organise school trips, 36% engage with cultural institutes.

In 'other' comments: penpals, language ambassadors, work experience in Barcelona.

Only 3 schools employ a LA (2 schools specified that they teach Gaelic)

79% of schools said they would consider employing a language assistant in the future, if resources allow.

Is recruitment of qualified languages teachers an issue for your department?

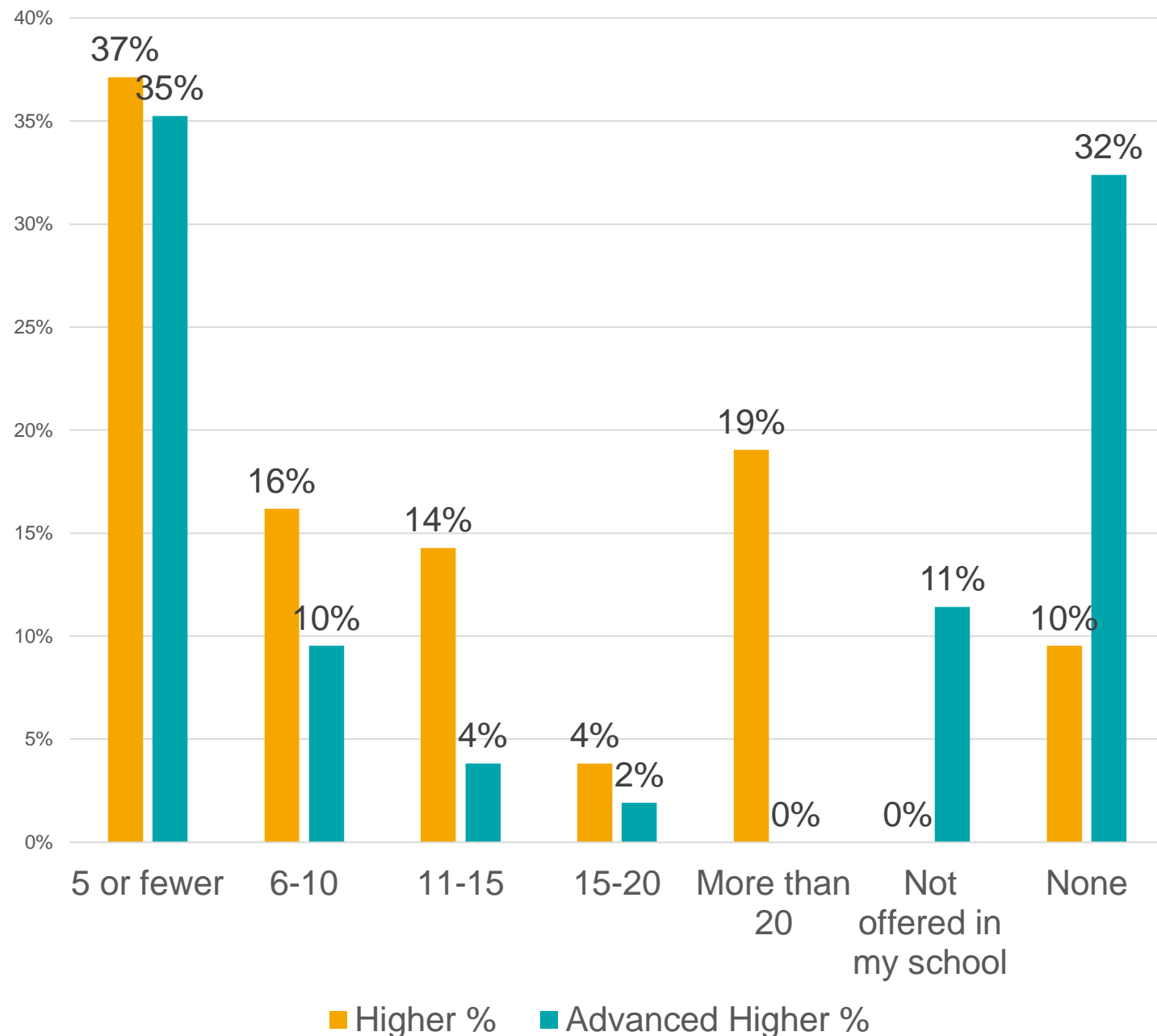


Recruitment of qualified language teachers

Recruitment of teachers is not an issue in 50% of responding schools.

In 'other' comments, teachers noted that it had been previously, but no more; jobs have not been advertised due to SLT knowledge of the local workforce; one school found it very difficult to recruit teachers of German.

How many learners in your school currently study one or more languages?



Higher and Advanced Higher provision in languages

The majority of schools deliver Higher and/or Advanced Higher provision in languages.

When only a few learners wish to study a language:

multi-level classes are taught (49%)

H and AH classes are taught together (42%)

Classes do not run (31%)

Teacher reflections on language education

Support both within and outside the classroom is key to providing a positive experience of language education:

“We are very well supported by management which allows us to offer languages to all pupils. This in turn leads to good uptake in S5/6, although we'd like to see this slightly higher. We have also managed to maintain strong German numbers, while gradually building up Spanish and Mandarin. We have a roughly 50/50 split between French and German amongst our pupils.”

Some noted the challenges that language teachers face:

“We have motivated staff who are prepared to teach multi-level in order to allow all pupils who want to do a language have the opportunity; it can be very challenging at times though.”



Findings from independent primary schools

6 independent primary schools responded to the survey

All primary schools reported that languages are taught, with French as the most frequently reported. German, Greek, Latin, Spanish and Italian are also available.

All 6 schools reported that languages are taught by class teachers.

5 out of 6 schools use language learning apps



Findings from independent primary schools

4 out of the 6 schools do not have contact with a nearby secondary school

Schools reported connections with cultural institutes, virtual links with schools outside the UK, school partnerships abroad, and involvement with international projects.

Increasing the types of connections was reported by independent primary school respondents as something that they would welcome, with opportunities for language immersion programmes, cultural exchanges and more parental and community engagement events that would celebrate different languages and cultures. As one respondent noted:

“This can help reinforce language learning outside of school and foster a supportive environment for students.”



Language	S1 (2nd form)) all learners	S1 (2nd form) some learners	S2 (3rd form) all learners	S2 (3rd form) some learners	S3 (4th form) all learners	S3 (4th form) some learners
Cantonese	0	0	0	0	0	0
French	14	3	12	5	3	13
Gàidhlig (fluent)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gaelic (Learners)	0	0	0	0	0	0
German	9	4	6	8	4	9
Italian	0	0	0	0	0	1
Mandarin (S and/or T)	5	1	4	3	3	5
Scots	0	0	0	0	0	0
Spanish	12	5	9	9	5	14
Urdu	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	1	1	0	1	0	1

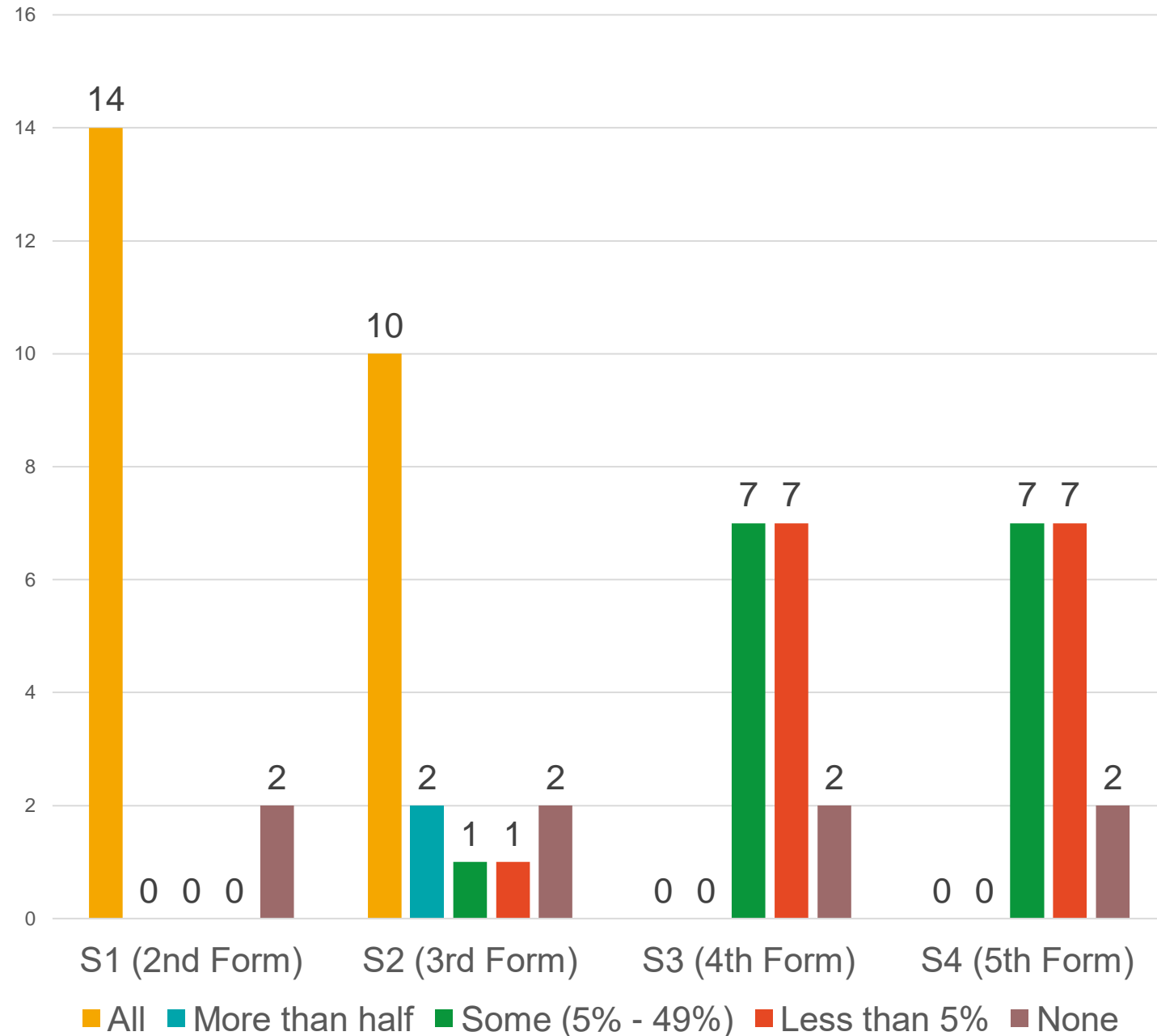
Findings from independent secondary schools

16 independent secondary schools
responded to the survey

French, German, Spanish, and
Mandarin are the most taught
languages.

Which language(s) are your learners learning in S1-S3 (2nd to 4th form) as part of the normal school day?

What proportion of learners in your school is studying MORE THAN ONE LANGUAGE?



Independent school learner numbers S1-S4

Independent schools experience the same drop in learner numbers at S4 between S2 and S3 as local authority schools.

Only 2 schools reported that classes do not run if there are not enough learners.

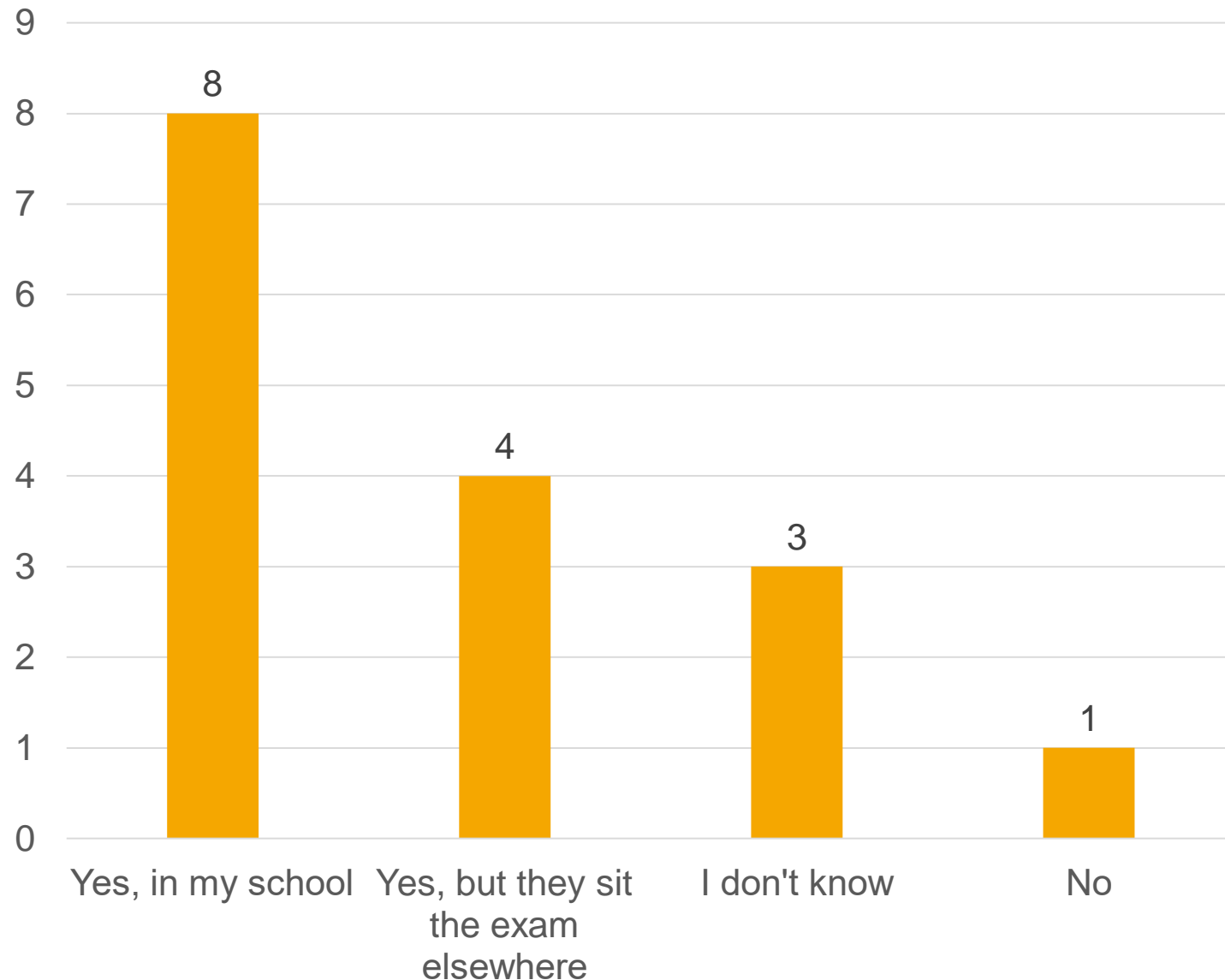
Higher and Advanced Higher provision in independent schools

All responding independent schools provide provision in Higher and/or Advanced Higher.

All responding schools reported that they had learners currently studying languages at H and AH.

Learner numbers	Higher	Advanced Higher
5 or fewer	5	10
6-10	1	3
11-15	3	1
15-20	1	1
More than 20	6	1
Not offered in my school	0	0
None	0	0

Do any of your learners have opportunities to take exams in the languages spoken in their homes or communities (other than those taught in your school).



Home and community languages

Most responding independent schools provide learners with the opportunity to take exams in their home or community languages.

International dimension in independent secondary schools

International partnerships and external connections featured strongly in survey responses from independent secondary schools.

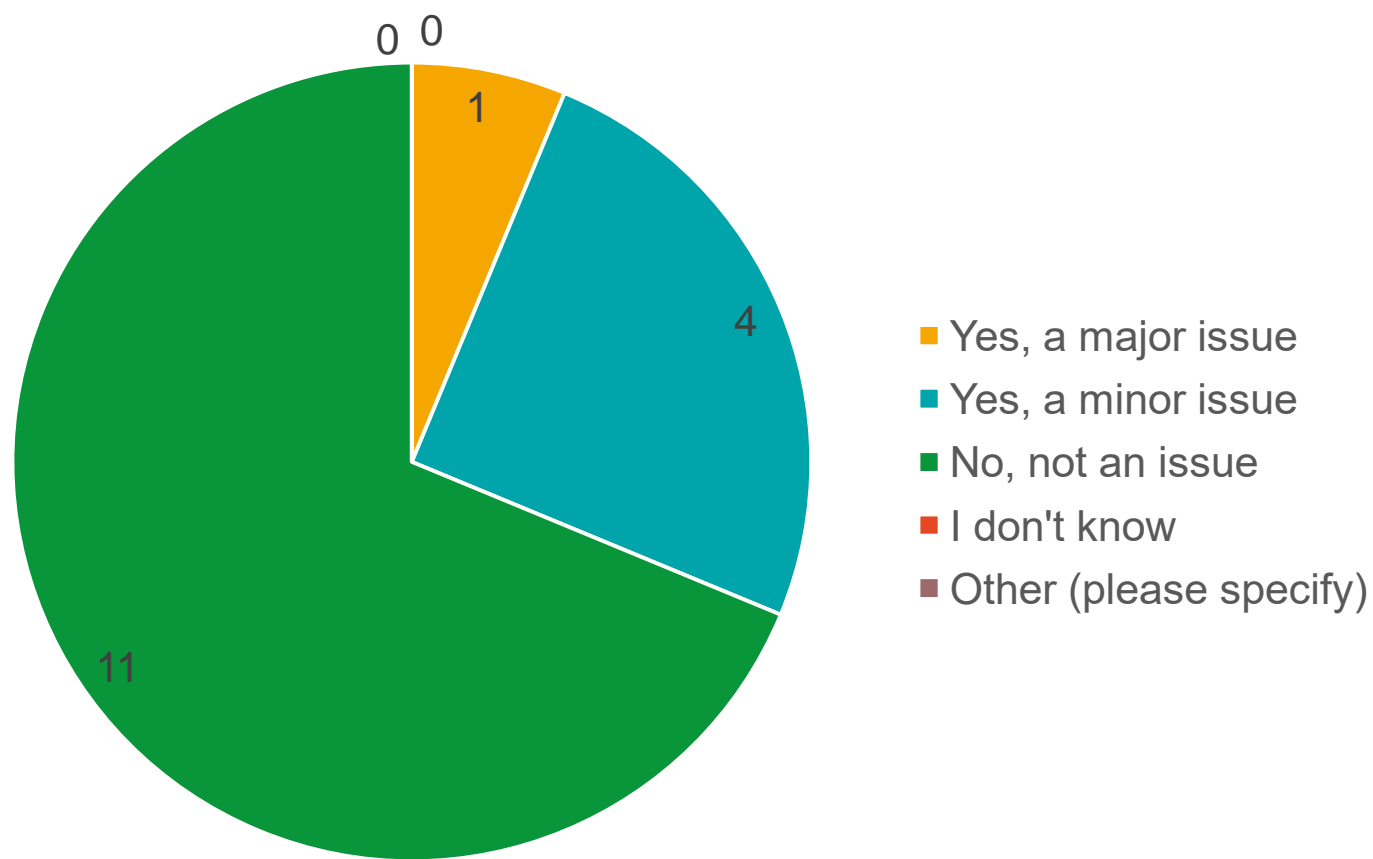
Most of the 16 schools who took part in the survey report that they engage with culture institutes, employ language assistants, participate in exchange programmes, and have one or more international partner schools.

Positive experiences of exchanges trips for language learning noted by respondents:

“The France trip and German exchanges are very motivational. Speaking more target language is also motivational, even from a young age.”

“Good mentality about language learning in general thanks to exchanges and partnerships.”

Is recruitment of qualified languages teachers an issue for your department?



Recruitment of qualified language teachers

For 11 independent schools, the recruitment of qualified language teachers is not an issue.

In summary:

- Primary schools are making time for language teaching and learning in the school day (1/5 schools embedding language learning daily);
- Primary schools keen to foster sustainable links with secondary schools, engage with international organisations;
- A variety of languages are learnt throughout secondary school levels;
- Challenges to language learning and teaching from multi-level classes and withdrawal of language classes with low numbers;
- Positive engagement with this first ever Language Trends Scotland, with over a third of all secondary schools responding.



A huge thank you to everyone who helped
us launch and write the first ever *Language
Trends Scotland!*

