Blog on what to look out for in GCSE ML grading on Thursday

Ofqual announcement in July

On 18th July (postponed because of the election), Ofqual announced decisions arising from the completion of their work in 2019 to bring grading in GCSE French and German up to that of GCSE Spanish.
https://www.gov.uk/government/news/grading-continues-as-normal-this-summer-in-england

GCSE French and German

> *Ofqual decided in 2019 to better align grading standards in GCSE French and German with Spanish (https://www.gov.uk/government/news/inter-subject-comparability-in-gcse-modern-foreign- languages), following the conclusion of an extensive programme of work considering inter-subject comparability. We required exam boards to award more generously at grades 9, 7 and 4 in GCSE French and German in summer 2023. We also set out our intention to review this to consider whether any further adjustments were needed.*
>
> *Following these adjustments, there is greater alignment between GCSE French, German and Spanish than prior to the pandemic. We were always clear that any adjustment might be phased over more than one year, and we are therefore requiring exam boards to make a further positive adjustment this summer in GCSE German (grades 9, 7 and 4), and GCSE French (grades 7 and 4). We are not requiring exam boards to make a further adjustment at grade 9 in GCSE French, since the evidence suggests that there was broad alignment with Spanish in summer 2023. Making these small adjustments supports Ofqual's role to secure qualification standards.*

It is important to note that the 2019 review (and hence this final piece of work) was only regarding GCSE French, German and Spanish.

These moves were welcomed by organisations, although they made the point that there was still not comparability with the other EBacc subjects.
https://www.all-languages.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Press-Release-18-July-2024.pdf

What will 2024 ML grades be like when announced on Thursday?

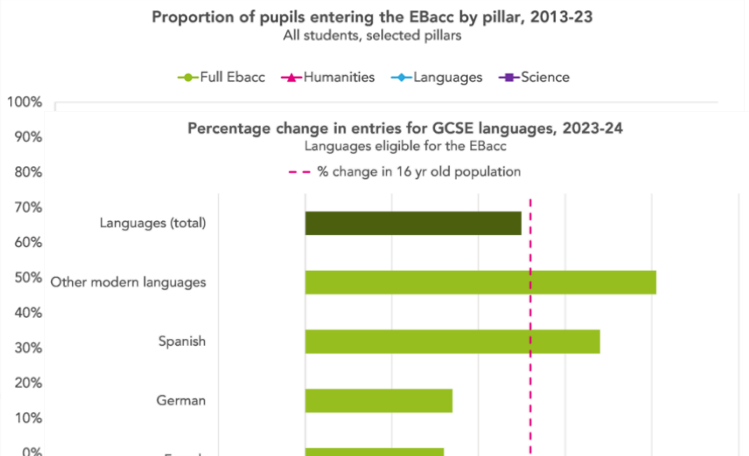
FFT Datalab published an extremely helpful blog on Monday.
https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2024/08/five-things-to-look-out-for-on-gcse-results-day/

> *Here at Datalab, we've been banging on about the harsh grading of modern foreign language GCSEs for years. So we were pleased to hear that Ofqual plans to make some adjustments to grading this year. But we were slightly less pleased when we heard the details of the plan. Essentially, the plan is to award some grades in French and German more generously this year, to bring grading in these subjects more closely in line with grading in Spanish. But we would argue that grading in Spanish is also overly harsh, and that these adjustments may still not go far enough*

Entries in ML

From FFT Datalab blog:

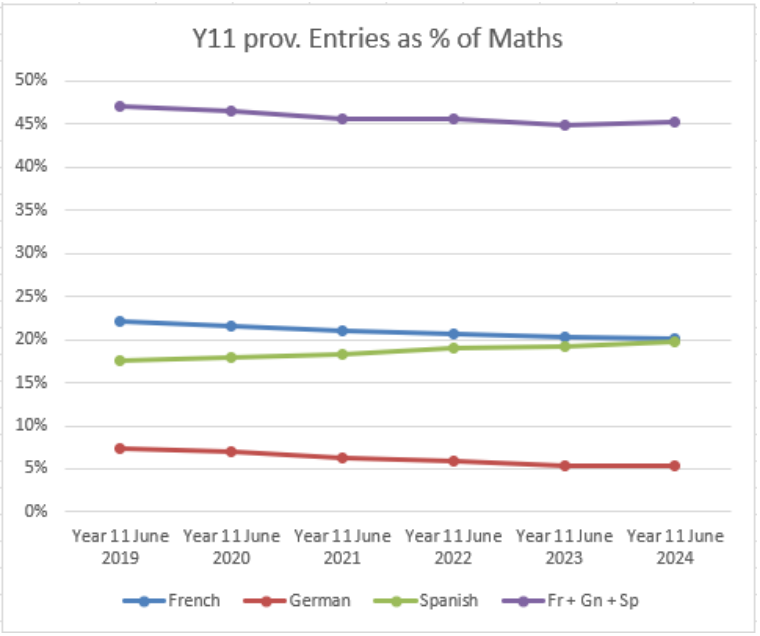
> *The proportion of pupils entered for a language has fallen every year since 2019. And we are likely to see another small fall this*



year.Provisional data on entries suggests that, while entries to languages are likely to have increased this year, they will have increased by less than the increase in the overall population of 16 year olds.

So, despite strong increases in entries in Spanish and other modern languages, we can probably expect to see the proportion of pupils entering languages fall again this year.

The graph to the right is taken from the provisional entries information as shows each subject as percentage of entries for Maths, as a proxy for the total number of candidates taking exams



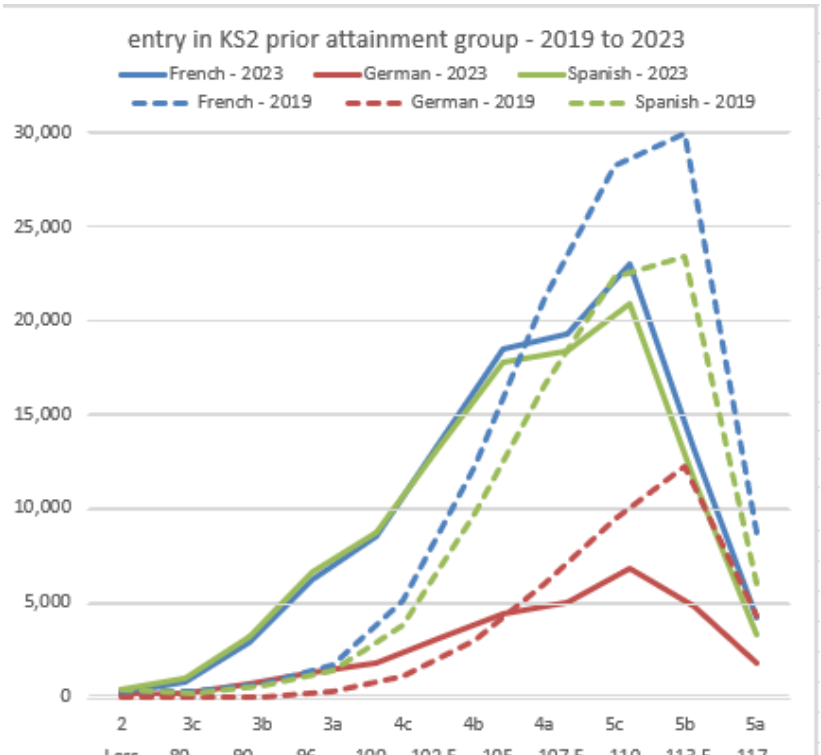
Cohort prior attainment profile in each subject

This information is only made public in October each year when the DfE publishes the Subject Transition Matrices, so we can only go up to 2023. Ofqual and the exam boards do have access to the 2024 prior attainment figures (i.e. KS2 in 2019) and use those as part of the "comparable outcomes" process to ensure a reasonably consistent year to year picture.

It is misleading to look at raw % achieving grades in different GCSE subjects, because the ability profile taking each subject will differ.

Although "comparable outcomes" is in place to ensure that in general % getting each grade in each subject remain reasonably constant over time, clearly, if fewer lower prior attainment pupils take a subject, then the **percentage** of higher grades should rise.

The Ofqual decision in 2019 was to bring to bring grading in GCSE French and German up to GCSE Spanish. However, between 2019 and 2023 the profiles taking French, German and Spanish changed, and we expect the change to be maintained if not furthered in 2024



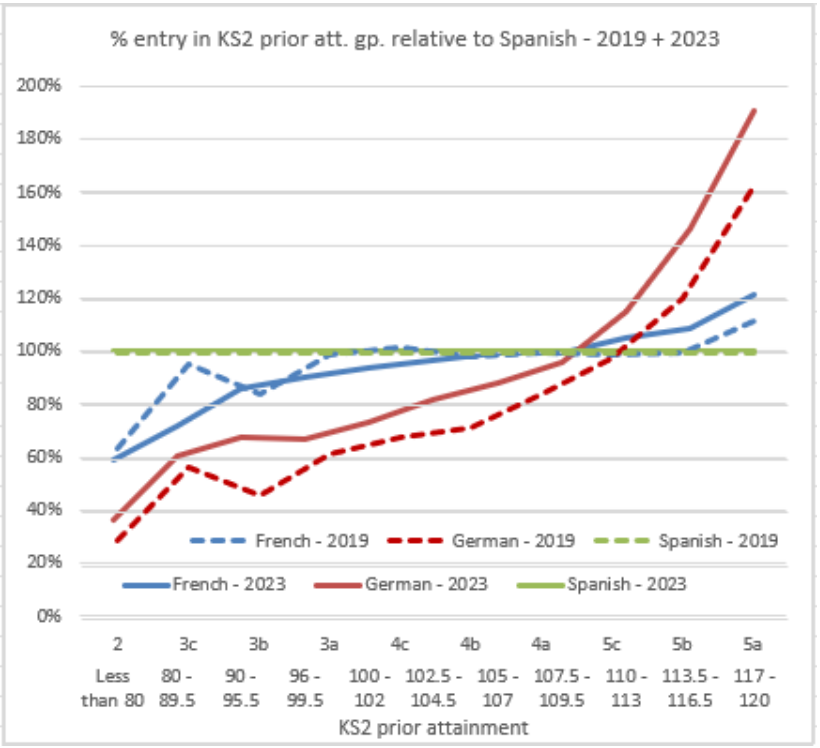
Entries from 2019 to 2023:
French: 109,139 to 110.101
German: 37,292 to 29,523
Spanish: 85250 to 104,718

There is a complication in comparison by prior attainment because the scale for KS2 prior attainment changed from sub-levels to scaled scores – roughly the KS2 Level 4b should align with scaled score of 100 whilst the top and bottom stay put.

We can see clearly from the top graph of numbers of entries where dotted lines represent 2019 and solid lines 2023, that the number of entries in Spanish from pupils of lower prior attainment have risen relatively

The clearest way is to compare within 2019 and within 2023 the relative proportion for each prior attainment group doing French and German relative to Spanish, which is shown on the lower graph above. You can see clearly that the proportion of most able students in German relative to Spanish has risen noticeably (and in French), and so the proportion of top grade in German should rise in order to maintain "comparable outcomes"

It is also worth looking at the raw numbers in the DfE Transition Matrices published in October. You can see below that in 2023, there were over 10,000 students for Spanish entered with scaled score below 100 (the "expected" score), and yet over 500 of them gained a grade 8 or 9. Whereas in German, only 2,000 students had KS2 below 100, and only 20 of them gained a grade 8 or 9!



Grades 8,9 from low prior attainment

Spanish - 2023

9	27	26	79	125	198	244	415	575	1,081	1,339	803	9	4,912
8	28	30	99	162	189	332	611	957	2,050	2,008	739	8	7,205
7	24	30	109	192	283	588	1,155	1,932	3,540	2,573	723	7	11,149
6	14	21	76	168	308	703	1,378	2,068	3,026	1,703	370	6	9,835
5	38	64	257	731	1,322	2,534	3,822	4,295	4,429	1,837	309	5	19,638
4	22	60	319	886	1,545	2,447	3,470	3,276	3,005	1,063	163	4	16,256
3	53	209	885	2,077	2,731	3,849	4,268	3,325	2,396	642	93	3	20,528
2	38	279	798	1,382	1,322	1,546	1,496	991	539	111	15	2	8,517
1	47	204	403	529	431	457	410	273	147	19	2	1	2,922
U	11	40	93	166	197	358	431	458	390	135	21	U	2,300
X	2	25	36	68	69	84	93	77	50	10	2	X	516
Covid	1	3	31	60	75	137	171	144	188	103	28	Tot	941
	than 80	80 - 89.5	90 - 95.5	96 - 99.5	100 - 102	102.5 - 104.5	105 - 107	107.5 - 109.5	110 - 113	113.5 - 116.5	117 - 120		104,719
Tot	365	991	3,185	6,546	8,670	13,279	17,720	18,371	20,841	11,543	3,268	Tot	104,719

Nos getting GCSE grades

Nos of low prior attainment

KS2 prior attainment (using scaled scores)

Nos in each KS2 group

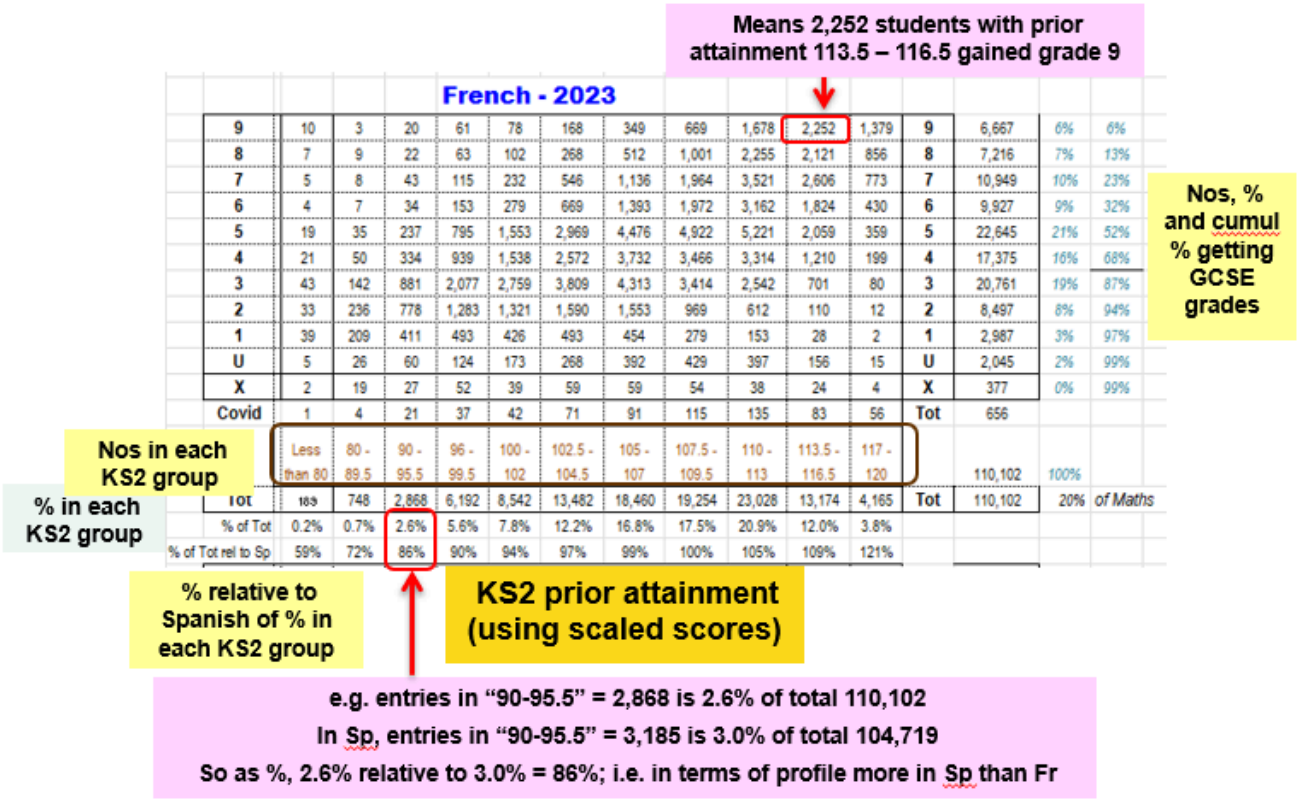
Grades 8,9 from low prior attainment

German - 2023

9	1	0	1	5	6	35	58	138	400	781	544	9	1,969
8	0	4	6	4	18	51	106	201	622	770	385	8	2,167
7	0	0	7	15	28	79	211	368	871	879	310	7	2,768
6	3	3	5	28	63	166	388	687	1,277	849	235	6	3,704

Nos getting

This information for 2024 will be published by the DfE in October, but it is unlikely to change much from 2023. Below is the subject Transition Matrix for French to explain what the figures mean.



9	10	3	20	61	78	168	349	669	1,678	2,252	1,379	9	6,667	6%	6%
8	7	9	22	63	102	268	512	1,001	2,255	2,121	856	8	7,216	7%	13%
7	5	8	43	115	232	546	1,136	1,964	3,521	2,606	773	7	10,949	10%	23%
6	4	7	34	153	279	669	1,393	1,972	3,162	1,824	430	6	9,927	9%	32%
5	19	35	237	795	1,553	2,969	4,476	4,922	5,221	2,059	359	5	22,645	21%	52%
4	21	50	334	939	1,538	2,572	3,732	3,466	3,314	1,210	199	4	17,375	16%	68%
3	43	142	881	2,077	2,759	3,809	4,313	3,414	2,542	701	80	3	20,761	19%	87%
2	33	236	778	1,283	1,321	1,590	1,553	969	612	110	12	2	8,497	8%	94%
1	39	209	411	493	426	493	454	279	153	28	2	1	2,987	3%	97%
U	5	26	60	124	173	268	392	429	397	156	15	U	2,045	2%	99%
X	2	19	27	52	39	59	59	54	38	24	4	X	377	0%	99%
Covid	1	4	21	37	42	71	91	115	135	83	56	Tot	656		
	Less than 80	80 - 89.5	90 - 95.5	96 - 99.5	100 - 102	102.5 - 104.5	105 - 107	107.5 - 109.5	110 - 113	113.5 - 116.5	117 - 120		110,102	100%	
Tot	169	748	2,868	6,192	8,542	13,482	18,460	19,254	23,028	13,174	4,165	Tot	110,102	20%	of Maths
% of Tot	0.2%	0.7%	2.6%	5.6%	7.8%	12.2%	16.8%	17.5%	20.9%	12.0%	3.8%				
% of Tot rel to Sp	59%	72%	86%	90%	94%	97%	99%	100%	105%	109%	121%				