

Grand Union Language Network Newsletter

September 2026

Welcome to our first newsletter of the new academic year! We have lots of exciting news and opportunities for you and your students to share in our September issue. We are delighted to be continuing to collaborate as a group of networks across the West Midlands and look forward to sharing more about our work and priority projects as the year progresses.

Actions from this month's newsletter:

1. Check out the events schedule for Autumn term 2026 and [sign up](#) to some of the CPD sessions on offer.
2. **Check out the [regional opportunities](#):** Sign up for the Languages For All: Birmingham Hub steering group and secure 15 places for your Year 11 linguists for the GCSE MFL Campus Day on 14th December and help shape MFL teacher CPD from the University of Warwick.
3. **[Prepare for Erasmus+ 2027](#):** Form an international project team within your school or trust, define key priority areas (such as inclusion or sustainability), and begin searching for European partner organisations via the British Council and European School Education Platform.
4. **[Share parental engagement tips](#):** Read Jonathan Mumford's article on supporting MFL at home and consider sharing his free parent guide with your Key Stage 4 families ahead of upcoming mocks and revision planning.
5. **[Review updated AQA speaking mark schemes](#):** Head to Centre Services to access AQA's clarified Paper 2 AO1 mark scheme and exemplifications for GCSE
6. Take the opportunity to give 10 minutes of your time to [contribute to research](#) at the University of Southampton.

Have you missed any of our CPD sessions?

The key takeaway documents, slide decks and where available recordings from Grand Union Language Network's CPD events from the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 academic years are now available on our [website](#).

Recordings and resources from all of NCLE's webinars are also available on Language Educators Online (LEO) for you to catch up at a time to suit you. <https://ncle.ucl.ac.uk/ncle-cpd-webinars/>



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Event Schedule for Autumn Term 2026

Organiser	Session title	Session Date and time	Sign-up details
Oxford University	Modern Languages Admissions session for teachers	Wednesday 16 th September 4.00-5.15pm	Oxford University webinar
West Midlands Supra Network	Reflecting on the Edexcel GCSE Summer 26 Language Exams	Tuesday 22 nd September 3.30-4.45pm	Reflecting on the Edexcel GCSE Summer 26 Language Exams – Fill in form
West Midlands Supra Network	Reflecting on the AQA GCSE Summer 26 Language Exams	Thursday 24 th September 3.30-4.45pm	Reflecting on the AQA GCSE Summer 26 Language Exams – Fill in form
NCLE	Lessons from the new GCSE	Wednesday 14 th October 4.00-5.00pm	NCLE Lessons from the new GCSE
Trent and Tame Language Network	Do Languages have a PR problem? Virtual Teach Meet	Wednesday 4 th November 3.30-4.45pm	https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/5Det3YFh8F
The Language Show	87 sessions across three days including Tracy from TTLN on cross-phase collaboration and Georgina from GULN on leveraging the value of all languages	Friday 13 th – Sunday 15 th November	The Language Show
NCLE	Languages, cultures and connection – building intercultural understanding	Wednesday 11 th November 4.00-5.00pm	NCLE Intercultural understanding
NCLE	Putting humans at the centre of AI	Wednesday 2 nd December 4.00-5.00pm	NCLE Humans at the centre of AI

Regional Opportunities



Languages for All in collaboration with the University of Birmingham has launched the *Languages For All: Birmingham Hub*, a collaborative regional initiative designed to tackle unequal access to MFL A-levels and build a sustainable future for languages across the West Midlands.

For more information and details on how to sign up, see the flyer attached to this month's newsletter email.

By leveraging economies of scale, the partnership offers state schools practical solutions to the financial challenges of small sixth-form classes through shared A-level tuition, joint residentials abroad, and visits to top employers.

The programme kicks off this academic year with a dedicated GCSE MFL Campus Day on Monday 14th December, giving participating schools 15 places for their top Year 11 linguists alongside speaking exam support. Secondary departments across the region are invited to join the steering group and help shape a multi-year calendar of enriched academic and career opportunities for their students.

The University of Warwick's School of Modern Languages and Cultures is inviting secondary MFL departments to register their interest for upcoming teacher CPD and outreach sessions via their dedicated online form. Designed to support MFL educators across the region, these sessions focus on sharing innovative classroom strategies, exploring curriculum developments, and strengthening links between secondary language learning and higher education. MFL teachers can complete the brief MS Form to register interest, share their priority areas for professional development, and help shape tailored CPD opportunities and school outreach activities for the upcoming academic year.



[Click to have your say!](#)

Erasmus+ call for funding

[Find out more here!](#)



Operating across four core priorities—inclusion and diversity, digital transformation, environmental sustainability, and civic participation—the Erasmus+ scheme, facilitated by the British Council, offers grant funding for both individual mobilities and multi-school partnerships. Schools, trusts, and local authority consortiums can access Key Action 1 (KA1) funding for pupil exchanges, job-shadowing, and staff CPD, or Key Action 2 (KA2) grants for collaborative cross-border innovation. Previous UK projects demonstrate how these grants can be used flexibly to upskill non-specialist primary teachers, establish joint eco-initiatives, and build strategic partnerships around Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL).

Recommended Reads

In his insightful article *"The Most Difficult Subject to Help Your Child Revise? I Think I Know the Answer,"* MFL teacher and examiner Jonathan Mumford tackles the common misconception that parents need to speak a foreign language to help their children succeed in secondary MFL. He highlights that supporting language revision is less about complex grammar and more about building effective retrieval habits—such as short, frequent testing sessions (e.g., quick two-minute vocabulary quizzes during car journeys) and encouraging active recall (translating from English into the target language rather than just reading key vocabulary). Mumford reminds us that parents often feel intimidated by languages, and by equipping them with straightforward, jargon-free strategies—like his guide *Ten Ways to Help Your Child with a Language You Do Not Speak*—we can foster stronger home-school partnerships, boost student confidence, and normalise consistent revision routines outside the classroom.

[Read the full article here](#)

Exam Board Updates



[Download the revised markschemes on centre services here](#)

AQA has released an updated Paper 2 (Speaking) AO1 mark scheme for GCSE French, German, and Spanish following teacher feedback. The assessment criteria, standard expected of learners, and overall requirements remain completely unchanged; these minor adjustments simply provide extra clarity around existing level descriptors for the Photo Card Unprepared Conversation. To make marking guidance easier to navigate, the mark scheme now features a dedicated column titled 'Key features of a performance in this band', offering clear exemplifications alongside the criteria. It also includes updated definitions of qualitative terms and clearer instructions on marking short conversations to support more consistent application.

Contribute to research at the University of Southampton

Former MFL teacher and PhD researcher, Betty, is building an AI-powered speaking practice tool designed specifically for GCSE MFL students. The goal? To give students realistic, interactive speaking practice and personalised feedback on their pronunciation, fluency, and spontaneous response skills—without adding to teacher workload.

To make sure this tool actually works in a real classroom, Betty needs 10 minutes of your practical expertise to shape its core features and design.

Why take part?

- Teacher Guidance: Receive actionable guidance on implementing Generative AI for speaking practice in your MFL lessons.
- Early Access: Get priority access to the completed prototype.
- Pilot Opportunities: Eligible schools may participate in the pilot phase, giving your students extra targeted speaking practice with direct researcher support.

Email Betty at e.calamelli@soton.ac.uk with the subject line "I would like to take part in the questionnaire" to receive your survey link and login details.