



**Response to**

***Green Paper 14-19:  
extending opportunities, raising  
standards***

**from**

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Language Learning***

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## Introduction

The Association for Language Learning (ALL) is the major subject association in the UK for teachers of all languages in all sectors of education and in the field of business training.

ALL is currently represented on the Government's National Languages Steering Group.

As one of the Association's main aims is to campaign for the development of policies which reflect the views and interests of its members, we consulted our membership (approximately 60% of whom are in the secondary sector) in the following ways to obtain their views on the *Green Paper 14-19: extending opportunities, raising standards*:

- 1) A consultation day was held in May, entitled: *The Green Paper: what does it mean for languages?* Participants were invited to express their views on the Green Paper proposals and discuss issues such as entitlement, disapplication, effects on numbers studying languages, and alternative proposals.
- 2) A questionnaire was sent to ALL members inviting them to express their opinions on the Green Paper proposals. This questionnaire was also completed by many delegates at the Association's annual conference, *Language World*, in April 2002, and produced a large quantity of detailed information which we include in this response.

The Association's full response to the *Green Paper 14-19: extending opportunities, raising standards*, which follows below, is based on the replies and reactions received via these strands of membership consultation.

As the ALL membership is, of course, particularly interested in the implications of the Green Paper proposals for languages, the paper is organised so as to highlight those issues, in which our membership has expertise.

ALL is, however, also interested by the philosophy and more general proposals of the Paper and these are also addressed.

ALL is content for this response to be made public.

Terry Lamb, President

May 2002

## Executive Summary

### **The intentions of the Green Paper**

- **to allow choice and flexibility and**
  - **to encourage greater participation in Education post-16**
- are fine aspirations.**

**The means proposed for creating flexibility within Key Stage 4 are inappropriate, unsubstantiated and lacking in coherence. The strategic view on encouraging greater participation is incomplete and flawed.**

**Some of the issues are not addressed in depth by the Green Paper proposals. More creative solutions should be sought as a matter of urgency, especially through linking languages with vocational study.**  
ALL makes alternative proposals in Part V.

**The proposals specifically for languages are more destructive than constructive. The development of a strategic, joined-up view on languages throughout UK society is not supported by these proposals.**

**The contemporary role and nature of language learning and teaching are misrepresented, and their social role ignored.**

ALL seeks to redress this in Parts II and IV of this paper.

**Evidence from ALL members on the impact of the proposals (even before any implementation) is deeply concerning.**

The findings of the ALL questionnaire to members are included in Parts VIII, IX and X; they are highly detailed and reward close attention.

**There is a grave risk that the proposals will exacerbate social polarisation and exclude many of our most excluded children even further from life opportunities.**

<b>Part I</b>	<b>ALL response to the Green Paper in general and to the Language Learning document</b>
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### **Praise for the Green Paper**

We welcome some of the aspirations, and some of the elements of the Green Paper, namely:

1. The 14-19 holistic approach is a reform which has been long over due.
2. The intention to address the issue of post -16 opt out.
3. The development of flexibility in the curriculum through encouraging involvement in achievements other than just the academic, and by moving the focus from GCSE. *The skills of young people do need to be broadened in this way to improve their employability.*
4. Attention to raising the profile of vocational learning.
5. The notion of allowing choice. *Choice however is not welcome in such an unstructured way as is proposed.*
6. The apparent commitment to existing linguistic diversity in the UK.

### **BUT...**

We do not welcome the following elements, to many of which we have strong objections and about all of which we have specific questions:

1. If 13 year-olds are to choose the content of 50% of their curriculum time, we believe that social advantage and disadvantage will persist through social reproduction.
2. The proposals create a danger of loss of breadth of the curriculum, with specialisation taking place too early.
3. The management of individual learning programmes will be complex, hard to sustain and time-consuming.

In respect to language learning specifically, the programmes will also often be under the aegis of individuals who may themselves not see the point of language learning or who may be so uninformed of its nature and potential that they believe it to be inappropriate for certain types of learner. Given the current cycle of inadequate language capability which we need to break, the Government would need to put in place checks and balances to ensure that advice is impartial and acknowledges the contemporary role of languages, rather than leaving them to be presented in an old -fashioned way as difficult,

academic, and irrelevant.

4. There will be a biased, unrounded and scientific core to the curriculum: mathematics, science, ICT and English which will not serve the stated intention of supporting progression for many of our young people.

### **The Language Learning document**

We welcome the issuing of a document on 'Language Learning' outlining the Government's broad ambitions to promote the nation's linguistic capability, although we are dismayed that it is sidelined into a separate publication.

We feel that there are many points where the rhetoric in this document fails to 'join up' with the proposals in the Green Paper itself. These areas of paradox will be explored in the following sections.

## Part II Rationale for learning languages

The reasons for learning languages have been well documented elsewhere so we do not wish to go into detail here. Languages have also received an enormous endorsement from the media since the Green Paper was published, and greater coverage and support than ever before. Public opinion is also starting to support language learning. The Eurobarometer survey in 2000 revealed high levels of support for the importance of language learning. The proposed demotion of languages is therefore **not** supported by public opinion.

The Government would, no doubt, support the following positive reasons for learning languages:

1. **Countering racism** - especially in the light of recent political developments both in other European countries, e.g. France, and at home, e.g. towns in the north of England. Language learning has an important part to play in educating our citizens to be more outward-looking and to accept and enjoy difference.
2. **European issues** - EU recommendations such as the Bologna Treaty and pragmatic social and professional considerations:

The European Commission states in a White Paper (1995:10) that

*“proficiency in several languages has today become essential for getting a job. This is particularly true in a single European market without frontiers. It is also an asset which makes it easier to move towards others, to discover different cultures and mentalities, to stimulate one’s intellectual agility. While being a factor of European identity and citizenship, multilingualism is at the same time a cornerstone of the knowledge-based society.”*

The EC therefore recommends proficiency in three European languages for all citizens of Europe. Increasingly our UK pupils are becoming the disadvantaged of Europe, as other Europeans are competent in English plus two other languages.

The Presidency Conclusions of the Barcelona Council (March 2002) refer to action

*‘to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age ‘*

3. **Personal fulfilment** – literacy; transcultural competence and citizenship leading to mutual understanding as well as personal job prospects.
4. **Peace** – languages development has been fast-tracked in the US post-11<sup>th</sup> September; there is a realisation that British expertise in Middle Eastern studies is dangerously low (see Footitt, 2001).
5. **Economy** – increasing national competitiveness. One in five companies is losing business through inadequate language and cultural skills (DTI and LNTD research). Research has shown that better language and communication skills could double our exports to western Europe (Lunch, 2002).
6. **Employability** – Companies are increasingly looking to foreign nationals to fill their linguistic requirements. Language graduates have employment levels second only to the medical professions.
7. **World class qualifications** – Languages would increase the status of qualifications in the global society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. How could vocational qualifications claim to be ‘world-class’, enjoying greater status, without a language component, when the reality is that languages are needed in most of those vocations?

For ALL and its members, the bone of contention is the **strategy for implementation** of the 14-19 vision, both for the curriculum as a whole and for languages specifically.

### Part III ALL's critical view on the Green Paper

The publication of the Green Paper has already done considerable damage in the field of language teaching and learning in schools across the country as schools have taken the Government's discussion of these issues (specifically the KS4 proposals) as a green light to resolve local problems of teacher supply and curriculum time (viz. Parts IX and X). Morale amongst teachers of languages is low in consequence.

ALL fears and asserts that implementation of the Green Paper recommendations would further impair the UK's future language capabilities.

1. There is a need to build up the linguistic capacity of the nation; yet the timescales proposed imply a whole **missing generation** of language learners (at best). For the next ten years at least, most pupils will be deciding whether to continue with their language study on the basis of just three years' experience, an inadequate foundation which may lead to low levels of satisfaction, and to an unconsidered short-term preference for new options.
2. The Green Paper 'Language learning' document is a 'wish-list' – heavy on rhetoric, but **lacking coherent strategy or concrete policies** to improve the UK's performance in languages.

There is a paradox in the reference to early language learning as being 'essential' for successful participation in the global economy (DfES, 2002: 3.2.1), and in the proposals not to include languages as a core element of the curriculum in primary schools and to remove them from the list of compulsory subjects in KS4.

The Government rightly asserts that:

*“we do not value languages, or recognise the contribution they make to the economy and to society. We need to challenge this attitude and inspire people of all ages to **learn a language**”* (DfES, 2002: 3)

How does the demotion of languages to an optional subject, in the Green Paper, challenge this attitude?

It simply reinforces a perception that languages are far less important than other subjects. (See also Part IX Comments A1(3))

There have in fact already been changes of attitude since a language was made compulsory in KS4. Many schools report that most pupils are no longer questioning why they have to study a modern foreign language (MFL). There is, however, a strong feeling amongst our members that this change in attitude will not last when languages become effectively optional (see Part IX Comments G2 (5) and A3(2)).

It is unacceptable that language learning will only be compulsory for three years. Pupils will have very little to show for their efforts (despite talk of music grades).

The measure is in fact perceived as a backward step, and even in schools with a long history of compulsory and successful language learning, there are now plans to make it optional (see Part IX Comments S3(5)). Numbers of pupils continuing with languages will be decimated, despite the rhetoric. In our survey of ALL members, 86% disagree or strongly disagree that the proposed measures will increase take-up at A/AS level and in HE.

The wish list includes positive statements about the Government's commitment to community languages. However, such grand statements are unsubstantiated in the proposals.

3. The Nuffield Report was called a blueprint by the DfES and yet the Green Paper **disregards Nuffield's findings**. Nuffield identifies many areas which, if addressed, would lead to the necessary improvement of our linguistic capability. (The option of dropping the study of languages was not one of them!)

Baroness O'Neill of Bengarve, Chair of the Nuffield Foundation, in the Education Debate in the House of Lords (11 March):

*“The inquiry identified those problems [with languages education] and made substantive proposals for their remedy. However, to be blunt, it did not occur to those who worked on the inquiry, or those who gave information to it, that a Government that were ostensibly committed to education would take the view that the remedy to current problems*

*with language teaching in the UK was to stop doing it, rather than do it better.”*

4. For continuing study of languages to 16, post -16 and HE **numbers will fall**, as will entries to teacher training. The Government's vision will be undermined. There is no evidence to the contrary. Indeed, the only evidence of the immediate effects of the proposals is in the ALL survey.

According to this data, **there has already been a change of language provision for September 2002 in 30% of the respondents' schools.**

79% of these teachers claim that this will have a detrimental effect on numbers taking languages (see also Part IX Comments S1). The introduction of new options and ways in which options are blocked make it particularly difficult to encourage further language study in many schools (e.g. one choice from French, German, ICT, resistant materials, graphics, food (see Part IX Comments S3(14) and S5(3&4)).

Even where pupils enjoy languages, they are tempted away simply by the extent of choice, e.g. language being one of three choices out of eighteen options (see Part IX Comments S3(8)).

Our language capability is far too important to the individual, the communities and the nation to be left to the vagaries of the market place! This will clearly have a negative effect on language uptake beyond the age of 16; even in those schools and areas where much energy is put into publicity for language learning there is concern (see Part IX Comments A9 and Part X General Comments 6).

5. **Fewer will go on into teaching**, not just because the pool is smaller, but also because job prospects are less secure, status is removed, and the possibility of teaching in primary will not necessarily be popular. 84% of our respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that the measures would have a positive effect on recruitment and retention of MFL teachers (see also Part IX Comments S3(1&5)).
6. The Green Paper is having **detrimental effects on teacher morale**— many teachers are considering early retirement. 88% of our respondents believe that languages as a Foundation Subject has been successful. Language

teachers have worked hard to achieve this and the proposals appear as a slap in the face. There is a high level of commitment to teaching languages to all pupils: 90% disagree or strongly disagree that languages should become optional at KS4. There is evidence, both in our survey and anecdotally through individual and email conversations, that a number of experienced as well as younger teachers will leave the profession as a direct result of these proposals (see for example Part X General Comments (7&14)).

7. There will be a **loss of teaching practice placements** for teachers in training, as schools lose large numbers of those studying languages to KS4, e.g. a school has already withdrawn from an ITT partnership as only eight pupils have opted to do French and sixteen to do German in Year 10 from September – this is out of a cohort of 300, in a department with consistently very good OFSTED grades (one of the strongest departments in the school), but which is in a white working class area.
8. There will be a loss of teachers from schools where there is little curricular provision, and such schools will be unlikely to attract the best teachers – again leading to polarisation of schools and raising issues of **social justice**, since the indications are from our survey that numbers will be particularly affected in schools with high numbers of pupils on free school meals, an accepted indicator of disadvantage (see Part IX Comments S3(1)).
9. The effect on KS3 will be a **fall in motivation**, as language study does not share the status of a core subject. 88% of our respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the measures would have a positive effect on KS3 (see all Part IX Comments in A6).
10. An **increased focus on French** will ensue (as has been observed in Scotland) in order to find some coherence and continuity. Insufficient numbers in KS4 will make studying two languages unviable (see Part IX Comments A6(1)).
11. **Language Colleges will not cope or suffice**: they cannot do everything, as there are not enough of them. The increase in numbers of Language

Colleges to 200 by 2005 was already planned – this is nothing new, yet was ‘re-announced’ in the Green Paper. There are concerns for ALL members from Language Colleges that they will have difficulties in attracting pupils when they have targets of 100% language take -up in KS4 and 50% dual linguists. Already low levels of interest in becoming a Language College prevail in schools – languages are perceived to be a difficult specialisation (which is again indicative of perceptions of languages).

12. **Breadth of provision will decline.** The Government is naïve in thinking schools will find creative ways of maintaining adequate provision for languages when experience shows that often Heads of language departments have to fight for space in the curriculum and to retain SEN learners (for whom languages are often perceived by non -linguists as too difficult). The evidence is that many senior management teams do not perceive languages as a priority and are already jumping the gun by making languages optional (see many of the comments of our respondents, e.g. Part IX Comments S3(9&10)).

Given this background, we are very concerned that the way in which entitlement is provided is left up to the school. The suggestion, for example, that online learning may be a way of meeting the entitlement is of great concern to 76% of our respondents, even in cases where numbers are small or staff are unavailable. We believe that online learning can certainly support or enhance language learning, but that it cannot replace properly structured classes with a teacher. It is particularly suited to highly motivated individuals, and especially adults (see Part IX Comments A5).

13. Access to **social inclusion will worsen:** fewer pupils from social classes IV and V study languages. These social classes are already underrepresented in higher education. The importance of learning languages appears to be less clear amongst these classes, as languages have not been part of the family experience (see Part IX Comments S3(13)); however, this does not mean it should stay that way if opportunities for work are to be opened to **all**. The Government is committed to making interventions to raise the ambitions of those groups who are perceived to be underachieving, rather than leaving them to reproduce cycles of disadvantage through low expectations and lack of awareness of wider opportunities (e.g. HE visits in Excellence in Cities

areas). Language learning is becoming increasingly important for life opportunities – and this is recognised by many sections of our society, but not by all – so we need to ensure that children do not exclude themselves from this (and that school structures do not encourage such exclusion) in the same way that we ensure children develop literacy and numeracy skills. Children certainly need to be involved in choices about their education – there is much international evidence for this – but certain elements cannot be left to chance. How many of us would have continued with languages (or science and mathematics for that matter) had we had the choice? (See Part IX Comments G2(16))

14. ALL members in the independent sector are adamant that languages would never be optional in public schools. This, combined with the likelihood that schools in leafy suburbs will encourage language learning, means that languages will increasingly be **an elitist skill**.

So much, it might be said, for the Government's commitment to social inclusion!

15. Green Paper recommendations rely significantly on a successful primary experience. However, **funding is not dedicated**, less than 15% of schools have specialist language teaching (Smithers, 2002a & 2002b) and only about 21% with KS2 are offering some form of foreign language (FL) teaching (Powell et al., 2002: 3), and so provision is likely to remain patchy, especially given

*“a shortage of primary teachers with FL expertise, a highly overcrowded primary curriculum, the stranglehold of the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies etc.” (Pachler, 2002: 6).*

Indeed, recent research commissioned by QCA concerning the feasibility of primary FL teaching concluded that whilst a generally supportive attitude prevailed,

*“the resources and infrastructure necessary to support any scaling up of existing provision are not sufficiently well developed to sustain the introduction of a national entitlement for all pupils” (QCA, 2001: 3).*

This is backed up by ALL's survey: 64% disagreed or strongly disagreed that the introduction of languages into primary schools will lead to greater voluntary take-up in KS4 (see Part IX Comments A6 & A7, and Part X General Comments (1&10)). Issues of continuity need addressing, otherwise primary languages will fail (based on evidence from previous attempts). Other issues of concern are the permanent reliance on teaching assistants or foreign nationals, external resources and the deployment of teachers who have not necessarily been trained appropriately, or at all. (See Part IX Comments G1 & G2(1))

16. The proposed language learning ladder approach will be difficult to manage, and risks **duplicating other provision**.

Will schools welcome another form of accreditation?

Will yet another form of accreditation have currency to either learners, employers or HE?

17. The alternative provision of language teaching through, for example, private language clubs or summer schools does not fit with a policy of inclusion. There is a raft of summer schools already, and **languages would be seen as an 'add-on'** to those.

18. Even if the long term effects of the Green Paper are positive (which is not demonstrated within the paper other than by hopes and expectations), there will, in the interim, have been so many teachers and **courses cut** from the curriculum in schools, and so many courses cut from HE, that it will be difficult to build them up again (Kelly, 2002).

19. The Green Paper is **parochial** in its failure to consider approaches taken in other countries, despite comparing us to them.

20. The Green Paper **has not risen to the challenge of planning imaginatively** in the area of vocational courses. It is surely inconceivable that any vocational courses could *not* include compulsory language study in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and still enjoy any kind of recognised status? The challenge is to

integrate the language/professional elements in practical and relevant ways in order to ensure that such qualifications are recognised internationally (see Part IX Comments B6).

## Part IV Assertions in the Green Paper which ALL refutes or challenges

Some of the claims and assertions within the Green Paper are not substantiated by research data, and there is a considerable and uncomfortable lack of evidence base for many issues which make the proposals insecure at best.

### The myths ALL wishes to dispel include:

*The disapplication of 36,000 pupils is an illustration of unsuccessful language teaching*

*Languages are an academic subject*

*Poor standards of teaching*

*Poor results*

*Numbers of learners will not decrease dramatically*

*Primary learning means more opting later*

*Failure overall*

*Numbers of dual linguists will increase*

*Online learning is a viable way of providing language learning in schools .*

The Government is 'hoping' naïvely that most pupils will choose to continue their study of languages and that schools will encourage them, but without any evidence to support this. In fact, the only evidence available shows the contrary to be the case.

1. *The disapplication of 36,000 pupils is an illustration of unsuccessful language teaching.* This is about 6% of cohort and is **not** a huge number when considering that only 40% learned languages until recently; now, the figure is clearly c 94%.

The figure of 6% should further be compared with the 5% of pupils who get *no* qualification at all when they leave school.

There is a range of motivational forces, not all to do with the learners' needs or attitudes, for *de facto* disapplication in languages as opposed to other subjects (see, for example, Part IX Comments S3(5, 6,7,11), B5&B6), e.g.

- a) the perception of senior management that languages are difficult and academic
- b) problems with language staffing

- c) the perceived difficulty of languages GCSE, which encourages disapplication in order to improve statistics and a school's place in league tables (NALA experiences recorded in online discussion on disapplication, 6-7 February 2002)
- d) disapplication of pupils who are unlikely to get a C at GCSE and therefore unable to progress to AS/A2 (see Part IX Comments S3(3)).

The readiness of many schools to leap at the possibility of making languages optional even prematurely reveals a less than positive attitude towards language learning, and this cannot be ignored as the context in which pupils have been disappplied. Some schools have indeed never made languages compulsory!

Only 93% of our respondents say that languages are compulsory for most pupils. Where languages are already optional, 80% report that this has been the case for 1-2 years, 13% for 3-5 years, and 7% for longer than 5 years!

2. *Languages are an academic subject.* The evidence that successful and motivating language learning is not exclusive either in its content or in its intellectual demands is visible in the successful progress of SEN pupils (e.g. Part IX Comments G2(10)), where language learning can sometimes be a special needs pupil's most successful activity; and the success of special schools in the late 1980s and 1990s – (e.g. Part IX Comments A3(2)). One respondent in a school with vastly improved attainment of GCSEs in languages wrote:

*'Less fortunate or less able children should be given equal rights to skills which could well enhance their career opportunities and broaden their horizons. MFL teaching and learning enhance skills in other areas, notably understanding of function of first language'* (see Part X General Comments (12)).

The wrong assertion that languages are too hard and the perception that they are an academic subject underpin both the readiness to disapply in some schools (see Part IX Comments S3(13)) and the readiness to make them optional in the Government proposals.

Unfortunately, many people in decision-making positions base their decisions on personal experiences, including experiences of failure.

Language teaching has, however, become quite different in the past twenty years. If languages are 'hard', it is often because of the unsatisfactory nature of the GCSE, exacerbated by recent changes to the examinations, which make them more demanding still in comparison with other subjects, e.g. through the removal of the use of dictionaries (see Part IX Comments G2(6,7), B1/B3, B3(19), Part X General Comments (10)).

**ALL suggests that this is in fact an issue which needs to be addressed in order to improve the situation, rather than taking the easy way out and making languages optional!**

3. *Poor standards of teaching.* Evidence on the quality of teaching is collated annually by OFSTED, whose reporting does not support this assertion; instead, their statistics show a year-on-year improvement.

The relative position of languages in the performance hierarchy does raise issues for improvement, but so do other subjects, such as ICT; yet this is not affecting the decision to retain ICT as a compulsory subject.

One respondent felt that it is indeed insulting to hear Estelle Morris comment to David Frost that "*we're not very good at it*" (Part X General Comments (5)).

There is, in fact, no real recognition of the highly challenging pressures under which foreign language teachers have to operate:

- a) the low status of foreign languages in the UK (exacerbated in some cases by geographical location – see Part IX Comments S3(11))
- b) the low status of languages in some schools (see Part IX Comments G2(2))
- c) school structures, e.g. number of sets, time allocation, finances, in comparison with other subjects (see Part IX Comments S3(10))
- d) shortage of curriculum time compared with other countries to whom our success is being compared (Milton and Meara, 1998; also evidence from online discussion in Part XI and Part IX Comments S3(1&11), G2(14))
- e) the late start in learning languages compared with many other countries
- f) the global importance of English (the positive achievements in English in other countries are not matched by achievement in other

foreign languages since English can better be compared to an *additional* language than a *foreign* language)

g) the rapid expansion of numbers learning languages and taking GCSE.

4. *Poor results.* More pupils than ever are getting a qualification in a language. 78% of the entire age cohort of 15 year olds now attempt a GCSE in a language and 40% achieve A\* -C. This is the best showing for any subject after English, maths and science, and shows considerable progress when compared with just 10% of the cohort achieving a pass at O level in 1977 (Mitchell, 2002).

61% of our respondents believe that levels of attainment have increased over the past ten years (also Part IX Comments G2(4&12); even when sometimes this is against all the odds (see Part IX Comments G2(14)).

Teachers who have generated this success are now, ironically, being 'rewarded' by seeing in schools, in consequence of the Green Paper, a change to optional status (see Part IX Comments S3(2)) or an increase in disapplication (see Part IX Comments S4(1)).

5. *Numbers of learners will not decrease dramatically.* Of the 30% of our respondents reporting a change of status for MFL from September 2002, 79% recognise that this will have a detrimental effect on numbers taking languages.

In our survey, the average percentage of pupils taking languages currently in KS4 is 90%, but this is expected to drop to 65%. This is, however, an optimistic figure, given that 14% of our respondents were from the independent sector and 6% from language colleges, and in both cases languages are compulsory and will remain so. The polarisation between schools in different types of area is reported in individual cases (see Part IX Comments S3(1&11); S5(1); A1(1); A3(1&2); Part X General Comments (9)).

6. *Primary learning means more opting later.* There is some support for this contention (see Part IX Comments G2(18)), but the evidence is that it depends on many factors which are not addressed by the Green Paper. For example, the lack of continuity into secondary was a major factor in the

collapse of the Nuffield Primary French Scheme in the 1970s. In the early 1980s, not only were merely about 35% continuing with a language from the age of 14, but many of those who gave up effectively did so as soon as option choices were made, usually in the preceding term. And many of these had learnt languages in primary school! (See also Part IX Comments A7(6))

7. In Wales, where MFL has not been a Foundation Subject, the percentage currently attempting a GCSE in a language is much lower than in England. Wales is now having to redress the situation through its own strategy. There are also similar experiences in Scotland (see Part X General Comments (2)).
8. *Failure overall.* The failure of languages in the National Curriculum is a myth. Results are comparable with other subjects – indeed it could be argued that they are better, if we consider the rapid increase in numbers over the last ten years (see also Part IX Comments G1(2)). We believe that the only failure is in the fact that the compulsory status of language study should be questioned, and that such radical change should be proposed just as progress is beginning to be visible (see Part IX Comments G2(3); G2(9)). It would be more effective and supportive if we were able to provide appropriate language learning opportunities to our learners on an individual needs basis within the much needed flexibility of the curriculum proposals, but at the same time retain language learning as a core element of the curriculum. The straitjacket of the ‘one language for five years’ which linguists fought in the late 1980s, and which, it was suggested, would lead to demotivation, needs to be removed in order to allow us to introduce more imaginative and varied schemes, but we must not remove the expectation that learning languages is the norm.
9. *Numbers of dual linguists will increase* – 81% of our respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that increased space on the curriculum would mean greater take-up of a second language because of pragmatic considerations of staffing (see Part IX Comments in A8; also S5(2)).
10. *Online learning is a viable way of providing language learning in schools* . The evidence worldwide is that online approaches can be highly supportive, but that language learning needs particular forms of teacher input and that

this is highly demanding and time-consuming (see much of the work of the AILA Scientific Commission on Learner Autonomy in Language Learning).

<b>Part V</b>	<b>Alternative proposals</b>
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1. Our major alternative proposal is to introduce a system with different types of matriculation, each with different emphases and different options within the range of core subjects.

This would maintain choice within the breadth of experience, so that, for instance, students following a scientific route would retain their range, and their language learning would be scientific in focus, possibly in a reduced time. This is similar to arrangements in countries such as France, Germany etc. and would require an accreditation system with national recognition linked to a Matriculation Diploma/GCSE/A level.

(See also Part IX Comments B3(4) and B3(8) for further alternative proposals made by members.)

2. The National Curriculum as presently defined for languages needs to be made much more flexible in order to ensure that individual needs and motivations are being met, and that progression is appropriate to the individual (see Part IX Comments G2(12, 15&18). As well as the current pattern of 'one language throughout KS3 and KS4', we need to include alternative possibilities which acknowledge the need to rethink the purposes of foreign languages in the curriculum, e.g.

- a) the 'language apprenticeship' (Hawkins, 2002)
- b) a more flexible curriculum: language tasters and language awareness in KS3 alongside study of a language
- c) diversification in KS4 through offering more beginners' courses
- d) opportunities to study more languages to a lower level (63% of our respondents felt that an alternative GCSE requiring study of two languages to a lower level would improve motivation in KS4 and beyond.)
- e) a focus on how to learn languages as a basis for life-long learning (learning strategies, development of learner autonomy).

We cannot rely primarily on an instrumental rationale preoccupied with jobs and skills, but have to promote more educational and intercultural rationales (though this is not to deny the instrumental value of language learning).

3. We need to rethink the general model of language proficiency which underlies the Attainment Targets and Levels for languages. Throughout there is an imbalance in favour of highly controlled language production and of accuracy, which discourages creativity, ambition and risk-taking in language use.
4. For the majority of pupils who will continue with the same language in KS4, progression needs to be improved from KS3 to KS4. We welcome the KS3 Strategy and its Framework for languages, though its effectiveness as a strategy may be impeded by the woolliness of expectations on schools. Its potential is to develop an improved base for continuity and progression, which would enable KS4 work to progress rather than to repeat.
5. The content of the curriculum also needs overhauling – the content is largely unrewarding as it is seen to be intellectually unchallenging in its content and unrelated to the interests and level of cognitive development of adolescent learners. We need to retain, but move beyond, the transactional focus on leisure and tourism topics towards more educationally demanding and appropriate areas (citizenship and values education, PSHE, drama and creativity, intercultural understanding, environmental education etc.). We need to build on exciting developments in which other subjects are taught through the medium of a foreign language (CLIL). This is an area which could be addressed through careful development of a languages curriculum in the primary school, as it would enable us to plan for greater progression and more complex use of language.
6. The above elements need to be reflected in assessment. GCSE examinations need dramatic overhaul to ensure that they encourage the elements of language learning described above (see Part IX Comments in B3), although 50% of our respondents felt that GCSE as it now stands is appropriate for some pupils. We believe that a broader range of carefully developed alternative accreditation is essential to improving motivation in

KS4 and beyond (85% of our respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this, and only 1% strongly disagreed) (see Part IX Comments G2(13), B1, B3(10,11,13-22)).

7. We would encourage the notion of 'applied languages' sitting alongside vocational and other qualifications (see Part IX Comments B3(8)).  
Languages are not only a skill in themselves, but also a vital additional skill to any learning focus (chemistry with German; business with Japanese; food technology with French etc.). 90% of our respondents felt that language study should be compulsory in some advanced and intermediate vocational courses. Work-related learning is included in the proposals, and language learning is work-related (though it is other things too).
8. We need to increase the range of languages offered, rather than reduce it, which will be one result of the proposals. We also need to include the languages of our communities alongside European languages, and the barriers to Qualified Teacher Status for potential teachers of community languages need to be addressed.
9. At least, languages should be part of matriculation (95% of our respondents agreed or strongly agreed that a language qualification at a certain level should be required for the Advanced Matriculation Diploma). Adequate experience of learning one language or a range of languages, combined with study of *how* to learn languages, would then form a confidence-boosting basis for life-long language learning.  
A small majority (56%) of our respondents agreed that there could be a slimmed-down compulsory core Programme of Study deliverable through a number of courses, as proposed for science.
10. We believe very strongly that there is a problem with timing in the proposals, and call for at least a delay in implementation of the proposals for languages in KS4 until the primary entitlement has been introduced and evaluated adequately. If the Government is suggesting that introduction to language learning at a younger age will improve motivation, then we cannot make decisions now which will blight the future opportunities of a generation of children who will not have had the privilege of early language learning.

Similarly, however, it must be recognised that until *all* pupils have the same opportunities to learn a language in primary schools wherever they may be, there will still be issues of equal opportunities and social inclusion to consider.

11. If the term is retained, 'entitlement' needs to be defined as a right, not an opportunity. The expectation should be that most pupils will continue in every school. Clear targets and expectations need to be set.
  
12. We recommend that the writers of the Green Paper reconsider and clarify their thinking on what should constitute a core in KS4. For example, Maths is accepted as being part of the core, without discussion. Questions could be equally well asked of Maths (or other subjects) as they are of languages. Numeracy (as opposed to Maths) is certainly a core skill, but ...  
*Is take-up of Maths to A level any greater than that of languages?*  
*Is Maths therefore irrelevant in many eyes? Is it failing to motivate?*  
*Should it not become an entitlement rather than a core subject?*

### **Alternative proposals**

- greater diversification of languages and accreditations, looking at alternative bodies to help with funding/training
- accelerated GCSE leading to study of new language or further studies of that language (possibly Foundation Tier in Year 9)
- accreditation at end of KS3 to maintain motivation
- there should be an entitlement at 14 to learn a second foreign language
- return to modular testing at GCSE
- accreditation system with national recognition linked to e.g. Matriculation Diploma/GCSE/A level
- develop the use/relevance/content of GNVQ language units in order to have a relevant accreditation option
- offer diversification of languages with accreditation (GCSE equivalent) in order to meet perceived needs for holidays/work etc. to encourage bilingual children to maintain and build on their language advantage
- the scope and potential for bilingual teaching and the crossover of subjects at KS4, e.g. ICT taught through French
- flexibility in KS4 – recommendation that although GCSE might be for the majority, there should be a minimal/minimum continuation of language learning for all. Applied language modules with vocational content, e.g. future ‘modern apprentices’ was commended as a future alternative route (‘hands-on language learning’)
- embed a practical language element at level 2 (i.e. GCSE equivalent) in learning – diploma/certificate in language as a key skill, using e.g. the ELP passport
- establish a simple/comprehensible scheme of levels and guidance to help solve the problems raised by flexibility
- different pathways from 14-19 – language element in each with focus/flavour of the pathways
- need for a follow-up in curriculum/course offerings to a comprehensive primary language provision for all pupils from 2012-14, i.e. 5/6 years primary French for all – what next?

<b>Part VI</b>	<b>References</b>
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## Part VII Response to Green Paper questions

### Chapter 1: The vision for the 14-19 phase

#### Q1

**We share parts of the vision, but believe that the vision will not be realised through the Green Paper proposals. Pupils will be closing doors at age 13 which they will find difficult to re-open, rather than having their aspirations raised and their horizons extended.**

1. The 14-19 holistic approach is welcome, as reform in this area has been long overdue.
2. The attempt to address post-16 opt-out is laudable and not before time.
3. We agree that the 'one-size-fits-all structure' has been problematic, rewarding academic achievement at the expense of other forms of achievement, and therefore we welcome the attempt to make the curriculum more flexible.
4. Attempting to raise the profile of the vocational is very worthwhile. For too long we have neglected this vital area of education, failing to raise perceptions of its status.
5. We agree that the education system should match the needs of the knowledge economy – although we maintain that this must involve raising the status of foreign language learning to help to match these needs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
6. Developing education with character and a role in citizenship and inclusion is very welcome as the education system has for too long perpetuated existing inequalities.
7. ... part of this is the apparent commitment to existing linguistic diversity in the UK.

#### However

1. *'We must ensure that no young person is denied the chance of a decent education'*: If 13 year olds are to choose their curriculum content for 50% of the time, social advantage and disadvantage will persist through social reproduction, as pupils will choose what appears to them to be useful in the immediate future and this will be determined by family and cultural

experiences. As the paper rightly says, young people can *be 'vulnerable in their inexperience'* (1.13). This may mean that they inadvertently drop skills which are key to their future opportunities, such as languages.

Choice is important, but it must not be premature and based on inadequate foundations (or information) which are likely to leave young people vulnerable to a lack of confidence in certain skills: choice can occur within a flexible framework which nevertheless maintains development in specified key areas, rather than being offered as a free-for-all.

We believe also that our young people in certain disadvantaged settings need to be encouraged to raise their aspirations

- to participate in activities which may not be traditional in their locality
- to travel
- to broaden their skills and knowledge of the world
- to be active citizens of Europe

2. We agree that the education system should 'match the needs of the knowledge economy'. The evidence suggests that this includes a national capability in foreign languages, which is one of the most desperate skill shortages.

Yet the introduction to the Green Paper lists only 'enterprise, innovation, teamwork, creativity and flexibility' as examples of key skills emphasised by employers, and omits to say that many would include foreign language skills. The reference to the desire to close the productivity gap with international economies is also laudable, but significant evidence exists to suggest that this will not happen without better means of communicating on an international level, by means of other languages. Languages must form part of our 'skills base' (1.8).

3. We are perplexed that any proposal for education for citizenship can ignore the role of communicating with others within and beyond our national boundaries, through a range of languages. We are assured that the Government does believe in the contribution of languages, and indeed believes it is acting in the interests of language learning, but the evidence gained from ALL's survey suggests that exactly the opposite will result from these proposals, and indeed is already happening.
4. The evidence is that the measures will not encourage social inclusion in terms of language capability. Elsewhere the Government recognises the importance of languages for job opportunities, yet it is prepared to introduce

measures which will decimate language learning in those areas where people are already disadvantaged (see evidence in ALL research). As the paper suggests (1.5), our young people must be 'prepared for a world that is very different from the one in which their parents grew up'. This is true, and therefore new key aspects of education must be recognised and **promoted** through the curriculum, as indeed is happening with the proposed core.

**Demotion** will be of great symbolic significance and will reduce the status of languages precisely in those areas where they are only just starting to gain ground. Languages will become a subject for the elite, and therefore job opportunities in many walks of life will be open only to those from advantaged areas and to foreign nationals who can use a range of languages. The latter is already happening.

**In summary we share parts of the vision, but believe that the vision will not be realised through the Green Paper proposals. Pupils will be closing doors at age 13 which they will find difficult to re-open, rather than having their aspirations raised and their horizons extended. Comparisons with other OECD countries cannot be made without also learning from the ways in which other countries encourage success. We must consider what those other more educationally successful countries consider to be essential 'technical and vocational skills of an advanced economy' (1.23).**

## **Chapter 2: 14-19: Marking the start of the phase**

### **Q2-7**

ALL believes that the proposed aims are useful and positive.

The recognition of work done in Key Stage 3 is clearly valuable in supporting a learner's sense of progression in their schoolwork.

The drawing up of an individual learning plan and constant monitoring will be essential. Whether this is feasible given time constraints in schools and often high turnover of staff is questionable. Yet without very high quality support, the risk of unwise and premature choices being made are all too real. This is, of course, going to vary from school to school and, particularly, from area to area.

Necessary support would necessarily include advice and counselling which is free from personal bias. Expectations must be raised to ensure that all pupils have equal

opportunities. Individual teachers' experiences of curriculum subjects must not be allowed to influence their recommendations. Too many teachers may themselves not have succeeded with languages, for example, and therefore perceive them as difficult, academic and therefore inappropriate for many pupils. They may also perceive them as unnecessary, given their own progress in the job market without capability in other languages. However, the Green Paper rightly recognises that the world is changing, and all pupils must have access to this ever-shrinking world. The question is, can we be sure that advice will be free from such bias? How can pupils who have never experienced foreign travel for financial reasons be expected to recognise that they live in an international context at the age of 13?

On the question of encouraging participation of under-represented groups, we think that there could be a useful role in recognising achievements of bilingual students specifically, by counting their (community) language as a relevant qualification for matriculation.

### **Chapter 3: The content of the 14-19 curriculum**

#### **Q8-11**

We agree with the two aspects included in the rationale in 3.9 but believe that the proposals will not be successful in fulfilling these ambitions, as pupils will not **have** to keep their options open. We believe that choice is important but needs to be offered within a framework which ensures breadth of experience.

**Comparison is odious, and the question of which subjects meet these criteria is impossible to judge, as all subjects could be seen to do so.**

Certainly the rationale for including science in 3.11 applies equally to modern foreign languages:

- languages are vital to many careers
- languages are important for the economy
- they can appear in the curriculum in a variety of ways.

Such thinness of argument is surely unacceptable as a basis for policy change.

#### **Q11**

The absence of definition of 'entitlement' is distressing and confusing, and gives curriculum planners wide-open scope for local interpretation: does it mean a 'right'? an 'opportunity'? an 'option'? or something else?

Schools will need firm and clear guidance as to what Government expectations are, if they are different from the old notion of 'optional' (which is how many schools are already interpreting the term – see accompanying evidence).

*Does it mean that **all** learners will be able to choose the language they wish to learn at any point, in any school? And what time allocation will they be entitled to?*

*Or that **most** learners will choose from a range of languages?*

*Who are the learners for whom a language is not appropriate?*

*What percentage of the school population is this?*

If 'entitlement' is to mean something stronger than 'optional', and is tending towards a 'right', then clear targets need to be set as a guideline and incentive for schools.

Our proposal described above in Part V would ensure that all pupils continued to develop a range of skills in a range of academic and vocational areas, rather than finding themselves locked into a particular route at an early age though having made ill-informed choices. It would help to break down the artificial divide between 'academic' and 'vocational' routes, which the Green Paper proposals risk reinforcing.

## **Q12**

Evidence suggests that disapplication has been loosely interpreted in many schools for some time (see *passim*). Often it says more about school structures and ethos which mitigate against language learning than about the ability of teachers to teach or learners to learn languages.

As such, this question is redundant.

## **Q16**

We have included proposals for the way in which GCSEs need to evolve in Part V number 6.

## **Q17-19**

We would suggest that the development of additional tiers of grades at the top of A and AS level scales is unnecessary and demoralising. It will simply demote the achievements of the vast majority in the same way that A\* at GCSE has simply made an A seem less of an achievement. Does such a preoccupation with

stratification actually improve learning or lead to greater levels of anxiety and loss of confidence?

### **Q20 (and Q13-15)**

ALL supports the desire to raise the status of vocational qualifications, and recognises that this requires strong measures. There have been many attempts made in the past which have failed because of a national prejudice, snobbery even, with regards to such forms of achievement. We need to learn lessons from such failures, which have often been extremely expensive ones!. Cosmetic renaming of such qualifications with the omission of the term 'vocational' will not fool anybody!

We cannot accept, however, that the status of such qualifications in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can be raised on a national and international level if a compulsory language element is omitted. Without this, such vocational qualifications will be seriously limited in their currency.

### **Q21-23**

ALL agrees that literacy, numeracy and ICT should be an entitlement (i.e. available to those who wish to pursue them) for all young people aged 16 -19 who have not achieved satisfactory levels in these areas. However, we would include capability in another language in this list for all of the reasons listed in our additional proposal.

### **Chapter 4: Raising achievement – a new Diploma for Achievement**

We describe a system (in Part V Alternative proposals) which reflects in part this proposal.

We agree that wider activities should be recorded, but do not agree that they should be assessed.

### **Chapter 5: Pace and progression**

### **Chapter 6: Advice, guidance and support for young people**

#### **Q37**

We believe that the proposed beginning point is much too early, and will adversely affect motivation in KS3, closing doors, encouraging a narrow focus, and perpetuating social exclusion and polarisation.

We maintain that education should be about *opening* minds.

## **Chapter 7: Drivers and support for change**

### **Q41**

We do not believe that the Performance Tables in their current form serve any useful purpose in the teaching and learning continuum and think they should be completely overhauled within any new system.

## **Chapter 8: Implementation**

### **Q44**

As we do not agree with many of the proposals to be implemented we cannot agree with the timetable either.

We would comment again though that the introductory point for 'entitlement' in the Primary Phase is much too far away.

## **Conclusions**

### **Q50**

As described in detail in the body of this Paper we think the Green Paper has identified only some of the issues and only in inadequate depth.

### **Q51**

On balance we reject the proposals, precisely because they will **not** result in developing a coherent, flexible 14-19 phase.

**ALL's Questionnaire to members – sample copy**

**ALL Consultation with members: 14-19 Green Paper Questionnaire**

**About your school / college / place of work** *Please tick or write in the boxes as appropriate*

Maintained		Boys	
Independent		Girls	
Primary		Mixed	
Secondary		Number on roll	
Language College		Urban	
FE/Tertiary		Suburban	
HE		Rural	
Adult Education		approx % FSM	
LEA advisory service		(FSM = free school meals)	
Other			

<b>If you are in a secondary school:</b>	
S1: Is MFL currently compulsory for most pupils in KS4?	<i>Yes / No</i>
S2: If MFL is only an <b>option</b> , for how long has this been the case? <i>1 or 2 years / 3 to 5 years / longer than 5 years</i>	
S3: Has your school decided to change the way it offers MFL from 2002? <i>If so, please attach comments</i>	<i>Yes / No</i>
If so, will this increase or decrease the number taking an MFL?	<i>Increase / Decrease</i>
S4: Approximately what percentage of pupils currently study an MFL in KS4?	
S5: Based on your knowledge, what percentage of learners <b>in your school</b> would probably opt for languages if they became optional at KS4?	
<b>If you are in a primary school or a secondary school delivering languages to primary school:</b>	
P1: In which year group(s) do children learn a foreign language?	
P2: Which language/s is/are taught?	
P3: Approximately what percentage of children have the experience of learning a language at some point in the school?	
P4: Do arrangements provide continuity in language learning between KS2 and KS3?	
<b>General:</b>	
G1: Do you believe that levels of attainment in MFL nationally have increased over the last 10 years?	<i>Yes / No</i>
G2: Do you consider the inclusion of MFL as a Foundation subject in the National Curriculum to have been a success or a failure overall? <i>Please attach comments</i>	<i>Success / failure</i>

**Questionnaire continues overleaf**



<b>Part VIII      Analysis of Green Paper Questionnaires – consultation with members of ALL</b>
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Based on 274 completed questionnaires on 14 May 2002

Where an average is given the average is based on the number of people who replied to the question

**Percentage of sectors contributors came from**

Maintained	14%
Independent	14%
Primary	2%
Secondary	42%
Language College	6%
FE/Tertiary	4%
HE	7%
Adult Education	1%
LEA advisory service	4%
Other	6%

**About the school/college/place of work**

Boys	9%
Girls	16%
Mixed	75%
Number on roll	1071 (average)
Urban	39%
Suburban	41%
Rural	20%
Free school meals	20% (average)

**For secondary school sector**

S1: Is MFL currently compulsory for most pupils in KS4?

**212 Responses:** 93% Yes, 7% No

S2: If MFL is only an option, for how long has this been the case?

**15 Responses:** 80% 1 or 2 years, 13% 3 to 5 years, 7% longer than five years

S3: Has your school decided to change the way it offers MFL from 2002?

**200 Responses:** 30% Yes, 70% No

If so, will this increase or decrease the number taking an MFL?

**55 Responses:** 21% increase, 79% decrease

S4: Approximately what percentage of pupils currently study an MFL in KS4?

**202 Responses:** average percentage 90%

Responses from schools with a below-average percentage of free school meals showed 97% of pupils currently study an MFL.

Responses from schools with an above-average percentage of free school meals showed 86% of pupils currently study an MFL

S5: Based on your knowledge, what percentage of learners in your school would probably opt for languages if they became optional at KS4?

**185 Responses:** average percentage 65%

Responses from schools with a below -average percentage of free school meals showed that 65% of pupils would probably opt for languages.

Responses from schools with an above -average percentage of free school meals showed that 46% of pupils would probably opt for languages.

**Primary school or secondary school which is delivering languages to primary schools**

P1: In which year group(s) do children learn a foreign language?

**73 Responses:**

Year 1	%	Year 2	%	Year 3	%	Year 4	%	Year 5	%	Year 6	%	Year 7	%
1-6	6	2-6	1	3	1	4	6	5	5	6	2	7	1
											9		
1-8	1			3-6	5	4-6	1	5-6	3	6-7	1	7-9	1
							0						
1-13	1			3-7	1	4-7	1	5-7	1			7-11	8
							0		0				
						4-8	1	5-8	1			7-13	1

P2: Which language/s is/are taught?

**73 Responses:**

French	51%
French/German	16%
French/Italian	1%
French Spanish	4%
French/German/Spanish	6%
French/Italian/Spanish	1%
Italian	1%
Italian/German/French/Spanish	1%
Spanish	1%
Welsh/Japanese	1%
Japanese/German	1%
Several (unspecified)	16%

P3: Approximately what percentage of children have the experience of learning a language at some point in the school?

**70 Responses:** average percentage 95%

P4 Do arrangements provide continuity in language learning between KS2 and KS3?

**74 Responses:** Yes 54%, No 32%, Varies 14%

**General**

G1: Do you believe that levels of attainment in MFL nationally have increased over the last 10 years?

**255 Responses:** 61% Yes, 39% No

G2: Do you consider the inclusion of MFL as a Foundation subject in the National Curriculum to have been a success or a failure overall?

**246 Responses:** 88% successful, 12% failure

### **Views on the Green Paper proposals**

A1: MFL should become fully optional in KS4

**267 Responses:** 3% strongly agreed, 7% agreed, 35% disagreed, 55% strongly disagreed

A2: A GCSE in MFL should be taken by most pupils at age 16, as at present

**271 Responses:** 53% strongly agreed, 37% agreed, 7% disagreed, 3% strongly disagreed

A3: The measures outlined in the Green paper will ensure that most children continue to follow a full GCSE in MFL, as suggested

**264 Responses:** 3% strongly agreed, 10% agreed, 49% disagreed, 38% strongly disagreed

A4: Some schools should be allowed not to offer GCSE in MFL, as suggested

**267 Responses:** 3% strongly agreed, 14% agreed, 40% disagreed, 43% strongly disagreed

A5: Online learning is a viable means of delivering MFL courses in KS4 where numbers are small or staff are unavailable

**255 Responses:** 2% strongly agreed, 22% agreed, 43% disagreed, 33% strongly disagreed

A6: The measures outlined will have a positive effect on KS3, as suggested

**251 Responses:** 17% agreed, 45% disagreed, 38% strongly disagreed

A7: The introduction of languages in primary schools will lead to greater voluntary take-up in KS4 as suggested

**264 Responses:** 5% strongly agreed, 31% agreed, 46% disagreed, 18% strongly disagreed

A8: With the increased space in the curriculum, more pupils will take up 2 languages

**269 Responses:** 1% strongly agreed, 18% agreed, 50% disagreed, 31% strongly disagreed

A9: These measures will increase numbers at A and AS level and in HE

**267 Responses:** 1% strongly agreed, 13% agreed, 50% disagreed, 36% strongly disagreed

A10: The measures will have a positive effect on recruitment and retention of MFL teachers

**267 Responses:** 1% strongly agreed, 15% agreed, 38% disagreed, 46% strongly disagreed

## **Views on alternative proposals**

B1: A broader range of carefully developed alternative accreditation would improve motivation in KS4 and beyond

**263 Responses:** 28% strongly agreed, 57% agreed, 14% disagreed, 1% strongly disagreed

B2: An alternative GCSE requiring study of two languages to a lower level would improve motivation in KS4 and beyond

**266 Responses:** 17% strongly agreed, 46% agreed, 31% disagreed, 6% agreed

B3: GCSE should be changed in other ways

**222 Responses:** 13% strongly agreed, 37% agreed, 47% disagreed, 3% strongly disagreed

B4: There should be a slimmed-down compulsory 'core' PoS deliverable through a number of courses, as is proposed for science

**233 Responses:** 5% strongly agreed, 51% agreed, 40% disagreed, 4% strongly disagreed

B5: A language qualification at a certain level should be required for the award of the proposed Advanced Matriculation Diploma

**269 Responses:** 43% strongly agreed, 52% agreed, 3% disagreed, 2% strongly disagreed

B6: A language should be compulsory in some advanced and intermediate vocational courses?

**269 Responses:** 39% strongly agreed, 51% agreed, 8% disagreed, 2% strongly disagreed

## **Part IX Green Paper Questionnaire – comments from members of ALL**

### **Comments - S1 Is MFL currently compulsory for most pupils in KS4?**

At present, a small group of very weak students follow a special course of study and have day release to the local college. (16 students in a year group of 150+). This will continue in Sept 2002. Otherwise all students do 3 x 50 minutes per week on GCSE or an internally awarded certificate course.

### **Comments - S3 Has your school decided to change the way it offers MFL from 2002?**

**1** - A new timetable format has been approved for September 2002 including 60 minute lessons and other radical changes.

The MFL situation. In Year 10, all students must do 1 hour of MFL. GCSE Languages will appear in the 2 'Option' blocks alongside Drama, PE, Music, Art etc. So those wishing to do a GCSE language must use one of their 'options' and both options if they wish to do two languages. In addition, those wanting to do a second language but not use an option could do a 'Short Course GCSE', I was told, in the one hour per week of statutory requirement time. (This is not a joke!)

I begged the timetabler not to put us in the Option Blocks!! My department knew what would happen and it did..... In the first 'dry run' ballot conducted in school without parental or any other guidance, 18 students opted for German and 17 for French from a year group of 180. We were then required to 'campaign' to increase the numbers! The students were very puzzled themselves as they are quite prepared to do a GCSE language but don't want to lose the chance to do their Art/PE, whatever. ("Why have they changed it, Miss? We don't mind doing German GCSE – its good and it's important but we don't want to use our options on it.") I have not yet been informed of the latest numbers opting for languages after the Parents Info Evening and all the info documents had been sent home for discussion. I watch this space with great trepidation.

Morale in the department is at rock bottom. We feel that our work is for nothing. There isn't much point in slogging on in KS3 to get high standards if pupils virtually stop learning in KS4. One of my young colleagues immediately started applying for jobs and has a new post for September. Despite impassioned speeches to the timetabler, letters to the Head accompanied by articles from the Times Ed etc. to support my arguments for retaining our MFL provision, we are still faced with this appalling situation. There was no need – we are well-staffed (or we were) in MFL.

I explained it thus to the Deputy Head who wrote the timetable changes – "I didn't realise I had such a clear vision for the students in my department until you sliced it off at the waist. That's what it feels like! I've taught languages in state comprehensives for 30 years, adapted my skills to be successful (I hope) with all types of learner and now it's come to nothing! This is 'dumbing down' of the curriculum in action. Our pupils deserve the best we can offer them and this is not the best." I really did do the best I could to persuade him down an alternative route but it didn't fit the vision of the new, uncluttered, neat timetable! I have 5 years to retirement – how can I find another job in a school that values MFL at my age??

**2** – A review of the school's curriculum model is currently taking place. Proposed models include decreased curriculum time for MFL. I am concerned that these

plans will be in place by 2003. In any event, the current model, which ensures comparatively high take up of 2 MFLs at KS4 (approx. 30%) will be changed.

**3** – Our school is a Technology College. The second the Green Paper appeared our Head teacher decided to remove the weakest 40 students from KS4 languages (we offer French and/or German) in order to provide 2 vocational GCSEs from September 2002. She said the key word/issue was ‘progression’ and we do not accept students with grade C or below at GCSE to do AS/A2, so she could not see progression for them from GCSE or age 14-19. The same argument could be used for maths, but no-one may ‘drop’ maths. I persuaded the Head to reduce her number to one group of 20 maximum, but I still fear this is the thin end of a wedge. The present Head retires this summer.

**4** – Currently we offer French to all from Y7, with the top 40% picking up German in Y8 and an open option for Spanish in Y10. Those taking French and German currently choose which language to continue with as their core MFL at the end of Y9 and are able to continue with the other language as an option within the choice blocks. Thus we currently have Y10 pupils doing GCSE in French, German, French & German, French & Spanish, German & Spanish and in French & German & Spanish. (We also have one pupil who has transferred from another school where she did KS3 Spanish and who only does Spanish as her core MFL GCSE.) We have a good GCSE A\*-C track record. Scoring over 50% consistently in recent years in both French and German (we are in an LEA with selective grammar taking the top 16% of the ability range). We also offer Certificate of Achievement (French and German) for pupils at the lower end of the ability range – in current Y10 approx 8% do Certificate of Achievement.

MFL in our school is to become optional from Sept 2002 in KS4. This is part of more wide-ranging changes, including changes to the school day to finish the core day half an hour earlier and to offer a range of subjects/lessons after this as ‘enhancement’. Pupils to be able to opt to take a core language to GCSE, within the normal timetable, but probability that other language GCSEs will be in the ‘enhancement’ slot. As yet the practicalities of this are rather vague (not least the staffing implication), as Y9 have not made their option choices. MFL staff were told all of this (decided at a higher level without direct consultation with the Head of Dept – me – and much of the detail has only emerged in recent weeks via Y9 option choice discussions), rather than consulted on the details or implications. We are all concerned at the devaluation of the subject and the possible presumption that we would be prepared to teach in ‘enhancement’ slots. We are also not happy that pupils have been asking us questions about next year which we have been unable to answer – indeed, in many cases these questions raised issues which we were not aware of and forced us actively to seek clarification from SMT members in order not to appear foolish or ignorant when questioned by pupils or parents currently in Y9. There is also concern that the changes could result in members of the department becoming ‘surplus to requirements’ for MFL teaching in the school. We currently have 4 full-time and two part-time (50%) staff, all of whom are dual linguists and I fear that much expertise could be on the verge of being wasted. In the short term I envisage a probable two-thirds take up of a core MFL (if only because the constraints of the option blocks will result in pupils ‘choosing’ MFL because they like the alternatives even less!). When I first joined the school 12 years ago, MFL was a KS4 option and had a 70% take-up. Personally, and in the context of our school, I do not object to GCSE MFL being an option at KS4, as I recognise that for some pupils it is not a viable GCSE choice. I would prefer there to be a non-GCSE

language related alternative (as currently offered via Certificate of Achievement), but am a realist and see the obstacles to this happening immediately. I am more concerned about the changes sounding an eventual death-knell for the survival of the 2<sup>nd</sup> MFL, if it is to be consigned to after-school lessons. Not only does this render the subject less attractive, but it also makes it more difficult to teach at the end of what has been for both pupils and staff a long day. Results will undoubtedly suffer.

**5** – At my school MFL has been removed from the core for KS4 September 2002. As Head of Department I opposed this, presenting a 4 page paper to the acting headteacher and the senior member of staff responsible for the curriculum. **(viz. copy of first page of paper at end of General Comments in this document.)** I had no response, either verbal or written, to the paper and my request that I be informed of the final decision regarding the place of MFL in the KS4 curriculum for 2002 was ignored – I had made it clear that if MFL was not placed back in the core I felt I would have to ensure the governing body was aware of the contents of my paper. In the end I approached the senior member of staff myself and when I was told that MFL was going to be an option (on the day the governors' curriculum committee was due to meet to discuss the proposed KS3 curriculum) I spoke to one of the teacher governors about my concerns and gave her copies of my paper to issue to members of the committee. I understand from her that the matter was discussed at that meeting but obviously the Governors followed the advice of the acting headteacher and the senior member of staff who I believe have 'jumped the gun' in removing MFL from the core before consultation has taken place on the Green Paper proposals. I was told MFL was being removed from the core in order to broaden the curriculum and offer more choice to the pupils. I believe staffing difficulties within the department due to staff taking up posts elsewhere and long-term absence and therefore having to rely on supply staff (not always MFL specialists) played a part in the decision.

I fully support ALL in its efforts to ensure MFL remains compulsory in KS4. At my school there was a complete lack of consultation and an unwillingness to discuss the issue face to face and given that MFL has been a compulsory KS4 subject here for 30+ years I view it as a totally backward step. At the Year 9 options evening many parents I spoke to queried MFL no longer being in the core and believed all pupils should learn a language.

If MFL remains in the core we have the opportunity to continue to try and change the UK's reluctance to accept that the learning of other languages is essential in the modern world. If the government's proposals go through and MFL once again becomes optional nationally I see no hope of changing attitudes towards language learning in the next 10 years. By proposing to make MFL an optional subject the government is reducing the status of the subject at a time when it has never been more important. There is a shortage of teachers generally – and MFL teachers in particular – but what the Green Paper suggests will further reduce the number of highly qualified MFL graduates wishing to train as teachers. The government should be supporting the work of MFL teachers in schools and show they attach great value to learning a language by ensuring it remains in the core.

**6** – Make study of an MFL optional. At present all do 1 MFL (except statemented pupils with severe learning difficulties) and can opt to do 2.

**7** – Due to the difficulty in recruiting and retaining MFL teachers of appropriate calibre and to address concerns about pupil motivation and behaviour, my school has decided to make MFL ‘optional’ from September 2002. We are a school facing challenging circumstances and the last five years have seen many of our pupils receiving a less than satisfactory MFL experience (although this was not found to be the case by OFSTED!). The rationale is that by permitting the de-motivated and unwilling pupils to opt out, we will improve the experience of the remaining pupils, which will then improve the perception and status of MFL in the school. It is likely that our MFL GCSE percentages will look better. It is also hoped that instead of having to take on a variety of supply staff or make an unsatisfactory appointment just to ensure there is a MFL teacher in the classroom we will be able to attract colleagues who will make a positive contribution to MFL in the school.

**8** – Our school told pupils in year 9 that they wouldn’t have to study a language in year 10. A language was to be one of 3 choices out of 18 subjects.

**9** – The school is a ‘Performing Arts’ college and priority in all curriculum matters is given to this because of funding. Languages have been the easiest target to reduce to allow more dance etc. onto the timetable, despite our protests.

**10** – This school has not decided to change the way it offers MFL from 2002, although I wish it would. At present, although both French and German are offered in Year 7, when parents opt for the language which they wish their child to take to GCSE, MFL is timetabled as one subject. Thus, as I have 6 teachers, I can only have 3 sets in each language in Years 9 to 11, timetabled as a block across the year group. English, Maths and Science have five sets. MFL is allowed four 35 minute lessons per week; Maths has six 35 minute lessons per week, English has eight, Science is taught as three separate Sciences each with three periods per week, totalling nine. MFL is therefore seen both by management and the whole school as equivalent to the optional subjects, which each receive four lessons per week; it is not seen as a necessary and vital part of the curriculum.

**11** – My school will not be offering a second language (German) to low ability (low literacy levels) students next year. Not because German is deemed too difficult, but simply to make space for extra literacy lessons. School is increasing its number of GNVQs on offer and fewer students are opting for languages.

I teach in Northumberland in a high school (13-18 years). In middle schools across Northumberland students only ever learn French. No other language is begun before Year 9. I have heard that most of Northumberland’s high schools are now restricting access to a second language and some are not teaching the first language – French – to all students in Year 9. I have heard very recently of suggestions that British schools should be teaching more German, Spanish and Chinese than French! We’ll see what happens, but that would mean redundancies in our middle schools and nowhere near enough staff to teach these languages.

Could ALL perhaps conduct a survey of areas in the country with middle schools and the effect they have on language learning and take up?

In my school we are all concerned that languages may almost disappear in Northumberland. Sometimes tuition in middle schools turns students off languages before they even get to high school. The motivation to learn a language in

Northumberland also suffers because it is geographically distant from mainland Europe and expensive to get there. There are pockets of severe deprivation and the county fares badly in terms of national funding levels. At sixth form level our classes are struggling to survive and Year 12 German receives only 4 hours per week, whilst Year 13 German receives only 4. French fares a little better – 5 hours for Year 12, 4 for Year 13. If our students are forced under new funding rules to go elsewhere to work in bigger groups to study languages I know that they will simply choose other subjects rather than do so.

**12** – French to be core MFL1. Spanish introduced alongside German in Year 8 (half a year each) then pupils choose Spanish/German in Year 9. Having made a positive choice it is hoped that more will continue MFL2 to KS4/GCSE, especially Spanish which has only been available in Year 10 -11 so chosen only by able linguists up to now, whereas uptake of German (studied since Year 8 for some years now) has not increased.

**13** – The only reason that I have had to answer ‘No’ is that the step to making languages optional was taken for the cohort who opted in the spring of 2001. The same criteria were applied this year. Children in the top 2 sets in each half of the school were strongly recommended to opt for at least one language. In reality only just over 60% of the pupils in the two top sets opted in 2001. More of the second sets opted than we have expected. In 2002 the response from the two top sets has been better but relatively few of the pupils in the second sets opted. It was particularly disappointing that some very bright boys who have CAT scores suggesting that they could gain A grades in MFL simply did not opt, preferring to take PE and ICT as options. I fear that this has something to do with the working - class catchment area of the school where parents cannot see the potential of the future in Europe and do not advise their children to take a broader view of education. The philosophy tends to be ‘opt for what you like doing’ rather than ‘get yourself a good general education’ to set yourself up for a demanding future. As a result the numbers doing a language have fallen dramatically. We had feared for the future of German as FL2, as in 2001 only 5 pupils opted for it. Now that languages are optional they are competing with very attractive subjects like dance, performing arts, ICT and business studies where pupils believe that they will get their grades more easily.

The decision to make MFL optional was taken without any consultation by the head and seemed to be motivated by the fact that the school had gained Technology College status. This involved hitting performance targets for % passes at 5 A -C and the Head felt that that could be achieved more easily if more pupils did easier GCSEs and GNVQ courses. There was no question of there being any reason to keep MFL as a compulsory subject on educational grounds.

**14** – Up to September 2001 all students had to choose an MFL (French or German) apart from a tiny minority that were disapplied because of severe special needs. As from September 2002 the options column containing languages is as follows: French, German, ICT, resistant materials, graphics, food. Students must choose 2 subjects from this column.

**Comments – S4 Approximately what percentage of pupils currently study an MFL in KS4?**

1 – Previously we had always had 95% taking a language to GCSE and the rest doing CoA, until last year when some pupils were disapplied to become the 'Careers Academy'.

**Comments – S5 What percentage of learners in your school would probably opt for languages if they became optional at KS4?**

1 – Pupils have picked their options this year and so few chose German that it was in jeopardy in KS4 and therefore in KS3. Management are keeping figures close to their chest, but based on my form group, I estimate some 20% opted for a language. This is consistent with it being one of 3 choices out of 18. Now we have put the details of the timetable for the government proposals to management, they are now telling the pupils they may have to do a language, but can ask to be disapplied.

2 – Because of the option system offered to pupils in Year 10, we have very few pupils opting to take both languages to GCSE. The other language is not offered at all until Year 9, when 2 lessons per week are devoted to it. SMT is anxious that in future years the second language is offered in Y9 only to the top set in French and in German, the extra two lessons being devoted to the first MFL in sets 2 and 3. Our usual numbers for German as a second GCSE language are 3 to 5 pupils, for French 2 to 4. In 2001-2002 three pupils opted to take German as second language to GVDSR and SMT would not allow the class to run – reason: too few pupils. This is the first year that this has been the attitude of SMT and it does not bode well for the future of two MFL to GCSE in this school.

3 – But only until more subjects come on stream. We already fight for position with media studies, drama, GNVQs in 4 areas etc.

4 – This would depend enormously on the structure of the options system introduced. The question is not simply 'would you like to continue to do languages or ....'

5 – Although I strongly agree with a compulsory language qualification at GCSE, I do think that it has to be made a more demanding and motivating subject to maintain interest. Even able pupils will drop the subject if it becomes an option – on the one hand, because it is seen as difficult, but also because in many ways the topics do not maintain interest and are a poor basis for those pupils who do decide to do languages post-16.

**Comments – G1 Do you believe that levels of attainment in MFL nationally have increased over the last 10 years?**

1 – The situation is more complex than the question might suggest. Levels of attainment in the four skills would appear to have improved – GCSE results have improved. However, how much of this reflects an improved ability to get good exam results (i.e. teaching strategies to get pupils to do well in exam) and how much of it reflects a genuine improvement in linguistic skill?

Levels of attainment in terms of knowledge and understanding of the language is another matter. I strongly believe that these academic standards are falling. I can support this with evidence of applicants for PGCE courses – whose written command of the language/attentions to detail/general grammatical awareness is

frequently disappointing. I often ask myself what is happening on undergraduate language courses to explain this poor standard?

2 – The department's results have improved greatly over the last 10 years in French, Spanish and German. Nationally, I have looked at the QCA web site, and MFL figures are comparable to other subjects. Where does this myth of failure come from? Some of the Year 9 pupils dropping languages are on level 6 or 7 and could have got a grade C this year if I'd known these changes were coming!

### **Comments – G1/G2**

1 – It is impossible to assess such complex issues with one word answers. However, examination entry patterns over 5 years are disquieting to A level MFL. Only coherent long-term (5-10 year) planning on teaching MFL in schools will produce the qualified teachers for the next generation. Permanent reliance on foreign nationals is not healthy, though they have a valuable contribution to make.

### **Comments – G2 Do you consider the inclusion of MFL as a Foundation subject in the National Curriculum to have been a success or failure overall?**

1 – Although overall a success – in the sense that more pupils have had the opportunity to learn a language and benefit from that experience and the whole profile of MFL has increased as a result – I do have serious concerns about other aspects. In particular, I feel that in too many cases MFL continues to be taught as an academic subject for all pupils. I feel there is still some way to go in terms of making language learning accessible to the less academically inclined. A typical pattern I've observed is for 'top sets' to be taught well (this is reflected in exam results) but 'bottom sets' are often abandoned – very low expectations/lack of appropriate methods and strategies – exacerbated by inappropriate context.

2 – The attitude in this school towards MFL is simple. From staff and students there is a strong groundswell of resentment that pupils should have to take such a worthless subject at MFL. After all, we in Dover can take day trips to Calais to shop and sightsee and manage perfectly well in English, can't we? We managed for the first time this year to expand our exchange with a school in France. Previously it has been purely a sixth form exchange for those taking A level French, but this year we took 25 pupils from Year 10, who were really inspired by the wonderful experience. Our German exchange partner school has agreed similarly to expand the German exchange. However, the Head of English has tabled an item for the next available Heads of Department meeting, questioning the 'timing and duration' of French and German exchange visits, since they "waste so much of the other subjects' curriculum time". If this attitude is in any way typical of the national picture, then I consider the position of MFL within the NC to have been the most dismal of failures. Lack of support from government seems to be compounded by lack of support in schools.

3 – A failure – as it has had the plug pulled just as we were about gaining acceptance as a compulsory subject and students accepted choosing at least one. Now the cry amongst Year 9 is 'Great, I don't have to do a language'. If it was worthwhile then it still is – but that isn't the message the students have received by it being made voluntary.

4 – It is now accepted that learning MFL develops skills, which are transferable to other areas of the curriculum. In our school, which produces GCSE results 65-75% A\*-C, pupils who would have been excluded from MFL programmes in the past, do

as well in MFL GCSE as they do in their other subjects – sometimes even better. High profile of MFL means that study of languages is accepted as part of the curriculum – only a very few (1 or 2 students out of 180/190) ask to be allowed to drop MFL. I know HoDs in schools where curriculum managers are already disapplying cohorts of pupils, largely because of staffing difficulties, where it is easier to exclude certain groups of pupils that struggle to staff KS4 courses. This is not disapplication – it just happens – others, I suspect, are victims of a narrow, anti-languages curriculum view.

**5** – I have noticed a change of attitude towards the importance of languages. At parents' evenings, parents now tell me how important languages are – many are speaking as workers in the modern world. Children who are not very keen on or good at languages also say how important languages are. Our present Y11 are horrified at the proposal to make languages optional. I really feel that we have made progress in changing attitudes, but I fear that our progress will halt as soon as the government stops backing languages as a compulsory subject.

**6** – i) Vast majority of pupils enjoy MFL study.  
ii) Different type of learning experience to any other subject.  
iii) Important to ensure those pupils who are insular and dismissive of other cultures have to think about themselves in another country.  
iv) Recent changes to GCSE syllabi, however, seem to be moving the goal posts to make MFL harder again. Comparatively MFLs have always been harder and this is being reinforced, with the forcing of pupils to produce work without any support materials or dictionaries. The emphasis on grammatical understanding has been overemphasised for less able pupils  
v) The content of AS & A2 with its current affairs requirements is not going to inspire droves of pupils to continue.

**7** – The traditional view of MFL as being elitist and accessible only the most academic has been challenged successfully by the introduction of languages for all. Now, however, we need to address the shortcomings of a system which only values the academic achievements of GCSE A\* -C grades and undervalues the cultural awareness and the development of practical skills (not just social and communication) and cultural knowledge in MFL which benefits all pupils.

**8** – This is a difficult question to be categorical about. I think it was the best thing that ever happened to languages to raise their status. However the impetus has just not been good enough, or the link with practical reasons (as well as philosophical ones) strong enough to keep up the momentum necessary to maintain success.

**9** – We had just got to the point where it was seen as normal for pupils of all levels to take a language when the above decision was taken. We tried to teach in a way which gave pupils of all levels some success and the fact that all but a handful were getting through to the exam and completing it. Even with modest grades, it was a success. Last year we had 40% of our candidates gaining at least a C, which was the same figure as the A-C score for the whole school. In an isolated, working-class community on the former Notts. coalfield we felt we were doing well.

**10** – Raised profile of MFL  
Given status  
Opened opportunities to more students  
Generated change in methodology

Inclusion – for some of our very ‘bottom’ students their language result was their best!

Played a very important role in developing skills e.g. Literacy

Improved status and higher profile leads to better understanding and heightened awareness of other cultures, Europe, breaking down barriers.

**11** – Generally my contacts with pupils as a teacher and adviser suggest that a large proportion of learners enjoy and benefit from language learning. Where this is not the case it is not due to MFL's inclusion as a foundation subject, but to poor teaching and poor quality, demotivating exams at KS4.

**12** – Inclusion of MFL as foundation subject has been partially successful. 78% of the entire age cohort of 15 year olds now attempt a GCSE in a language and 40% achieve a pass grade (A\*-C). This compares with just 10% achieving a pass O level grade in 1965. (In Wales, where MFL is not a foundation subject the percentage currently attempting a GCSE in a language is MUCH lower!)

On the other hand, experience shows that the National Curriculum as presently defined for MFLs is not particularly successful in motivating learners or ensuring their steady progress. A number of fairly fundamental changes are needed to address this issue, throughout KS3 and KS4 together. These include:

- Rethinking the overall rationale for FL study in UK general education (we cannot rely primarily on an instrumental rationale preoccupied with jobs and skills, but have to develop and promote more educational and intercultural rationales).
- Rethinking the general model of language proficiency, which underlies the Attainment Targets and Levels for MFLs. (Throughout, there is an imbalance in favour of highly controlled language production and of accuracy – we need greater emphasis on risk, ambition and creativity in language use (including much more active teaching of grammar as the basis for creativity), much more active teaching of the skill of reading in particular, and a much greater integration and cross-fertilisation of language skills, e.g. through tasks and projects).
- Definition and active teaching of a clear grammar ‘spine’ through both key stages.
- Rethinking the content of MFL programmes, away from ‘leisure and tourism’ topics toward more educational content (citizenship & values education, PSHE education, drama & creativity, intercultural understanding, environmental education...)
- Enhancement of the cognitive challenge of language learning (through teaching of language awareness, learning strategies etc. as well as addressing more educational content).

To have real purchase on schools and on pupils’ FL experiences, these elements need to be clearly reflected in new-style assessments. (Most of them figure already in the programmes of study for MFL, but are a dead letter because they are not assessed.)

**13** – Everyone has, however moderate, some ability to ‘get by’ in a MFL and it is a basic human right and the duty of a democratic education provider to give everyone access to the opportunity to learn a MFL and its inclusion as a foundation subject in the curriculum has attempted to do this.

But I do feel that in an attempt to make GCSE 'available to all', there has been a dumbing down at the moderate to higher levels so that MFL is sidelined compared with other core curriculum subjects and not varied or interesting enough to challenge or engage the better pupils. We are therefore producing fewer good or moderately good linguists.

**14** – A failure in my school, as no special consideration was/is given to MFL in term of time allocation. (Despite this, we i.e., MFL department, are still expected to achieve the same exam A-C result percentages as English/Maths and Science.) e.g.: in Year 9:

English	have	on	average	6	hr	a	fortnight	(top	sets)
Maths	“	“		6	hr	“	“		
Science	“	“		9	hr	“	“		
MFL	1	and	2	together	have	5	hr	a	fortnight
								(3hrs	+ 2 hrs)
								(MFL1	MFL2)

In terms of finance, MFL 1 and 2 are costed as ONE subject, not 2.

We have to 'make do'! In my school I feel that languages are not held as important as the other 3 subjects mentioned above, despite the fact that we average 95% A -D performance and 71% A-C; we also achieve 100% A-E

At National Curriculum level, level 6 has been reviewed and this has made it easier for youngsters to achieve – the changes made to the level descriptors were most welcome.

**15** – I find it difficult to answer this. On the one hand I feel that most KS3 pupils should have the opportunity of learning a FL. On the other, enjoyment of and enthusiasm for MFLs do not seem to have risen – they may even have diminished, where German or French is taught to the top 25% in ability, it must be done in such a way as to enable them to generate their own language (i.e. grammar & language structure). However, many pupils struggle because they do not possess essential general concepts of language and their enthusiasm wanes towards the end of KS3.

**16** – This is difficult for me to answer as MFL has always been a foundation subject for as long as I have been teaching. It certainly has resulted in many pupils 'begrudging' their language lessons as they feel they have been imposed upon them and they do not feel they 'need' a language in the same way they recognise the need for Maths, English and Science. However, being a foundation subject has also ensured that pupils of average ability have taken a GCSE in MFL instead of opting for another subject.

**17** – Our students now accept that a MFL is compulsory in KS4 and no longer resist having to do it. Our results have improved steadily since the inclusion of MFL as a foundation subject and is now well above the national average. We now have many more students who go on to do MFL at A level (in other institutions as we are only 11-16).

**18** – Despite the increase in numbers, it is still necessary to add that we start language teaching too late in pupils' schooling. The enthusiasm of Year 7 too quickly disappears by Year 9/10. Pupils need to have much sounder language knowledge before they enter KS3, so that they already feel confident. Too often,

teaching languages at secondary level feels like being on a conveyor belt of role plays and set phrases, allowing the pupils little opportunity to really use and manipulate the language. On this point, having now attended the ALL conference, I agree with the comment made by Professor Hawkins that pupils should do linguistics as part of their MFL study. Perhaps then, pupils would recognise that English has rules too!

#### **Comments – A1 MFL should become fully optional in KS4**

**1** – Not all pupils have the capacity to learn a MFL fruitfully. However, I fear that if MFL became optional, many relatively able pupils would opt out rather than in. There is in UK still no culture of the indispensability of MFL capability.

**2** – Yes, we need to accept responsibility for engaging all learners through our teaching, not through study being compulsory – it allows a small but disproportionately significant number of teachers to be lazy intellectually and in effort.

**3** – The government on the one hand says that there is an entitlement to languages, which those pupils who find it most difficult will not be forced to take up. On the other hand, they make languages one choice in an increasingly wide curriculum. The action is inconsistent with the aim.

#### **Comments – A1 and A2**

**1** – There should be MFL elements, but not necessarily GCSE or certificate of achievement, for all in KS4.

#### **Comments – A2 A GCSE in MFL should be taken by most pupils at age 16, as at present**

**1** – I cannot see much virtue in a pupil learning an MFL if at GCSE they cannot string together a few words correctly either in speech or in writing. There is no satisfaction in learning a subject for 5 years and feeling one has made little progress.

**2** – I don't believe MFL should become fully optional in KS4 as this will result in even fewer linguists and dual linguists – of which this country is already very short. However, I do feel that certain pupils who struggle academically would be better concentrating on basic English skills at KS4 rather than continuing with a foreign language. (There are many pupils who would probably attain the same GCSE grade in MFL if they were entered in Y9 instead of Y11). I feel strongly that every pupil should be exported to language learning in KS3 as it is so crucial to their awareness of culture, identity, communication, Europe, nationality etc.

#### **Comments – A3 The measures outlined in the Green Paper will ensure that most children continue to follow a full GCSE course or equivalent**

**1** – The Green Paper will see numbers in KS4 fall massively. One of 3 choices out of 18, and rising. Languages other than French will become unsustainable.

**2** – It is good to see the government, even wishfully, supporting the hope that more young people will study MFL and for longer, but so many of the statements in the document are simply claims that what is proposed (basically, reverting to the pre-National Curriculum status of MFL) will achieve this result. Most of the available evidence contradicts this. Mind you, even if MFL remained compulsory at KS4, it

would not solve the existing problems – that will be up to the expectations of the teachers, and in our examination-led culture, to the GCSE boards.

NOTE:

- i) 'Work-related learning' is included as one of the 'alongside' compulsory subjects – MFL is work-related, though that is not its be-all and end-all.
- ii) The DfES 'Language Learning' summary speaks ( *Our Proposals* p.4 para 3) of 'those who find it very difficult to [learn a modern foreign language]'. This perpetuates the myth (partly created, alas, by teachers) that the less able cannot learn a foreign language whereas they can learn much more abstract subjects like geography or physics. This is nonsense – see the success (and amazement) of teachers in special schools when they tried it in the late '80s and '90s. However, if 36,000 students are already being disapplied, that is something that the profession has to answer for and remedy.

### **Comments – A4 Some schools should be allowed not to offer GCSE in MFL, as suggested**

1 – There are a very few (but 'some') schools where GCSE is not appropriate; in some special cases they might only reasonably offer certificate of achievement, for example.

### **Comments – A5 Online learning is a viable means of delivering MFL courses in KS4 where numbers are small or staff are unavailable**

1 – I have yet to see online learning which could stand alone.

2 – We are working on an online learning project involving video streaming and web conferencing. Even as a single element in the course at A level, this needs a high degree of teacher input. To teach most of a course this way and lower down the age range is unrealistic.

3 – Online MFL learning would only suit the most motivated and self-disciplined – most pupils need the encouragement and support provided constantly by face-to-face interaction with a good teacher. Language use is a social activity requiring interpersonal skills and best taught in a socially interactive way. Online learning is a useful addition to MFL but cannot replace teachers.

4 – I have serious doubts re: AT2 delivery – face-to-face contact is better than video-conferencing. In my (limited) experience, voices were distorted, often unclear or not clear enough for sound differentiation – although I'm sure technology will improve but it is not there yet.

5 – I find it amazing that the idea has been put forward that online learning would be a viable option. There may be a few highly-motivated pupils who could learn this way but it has been my experience over the last 24 years that pupils need a great deal more help, revision and creative, sensitive teaching than would be likely via a computer. I feel that boys in particular would be at a disadvantage here.

6 – Online is a great motivator and therefore highly feasible.

7 – Online learning is only viable with strongly motivated pupils who can organise their own study time – who have the determination to study independently.

**8** – Children/students of KS4 require supervision and they always ask questions. Languages are person to person learning. They need personal guidance. My students on French and German exchanges remark how different it is to learn and use their languages in the TL country with their partners and how much easier it is than in class. They would find learning all of it online less stimulating than learning in their groups.

**9** – ICT can and should be used to enhance and support provision; it should not try to replace delivery in the classroom. Only the most committed students would make real progress. These are not the students we are considering. Disadvantaged schools in disadvantaged circumstances cannot attract MFL staff in sufficient numbers (I worked in city schools for many years). How would online provision cater for the needs of students in schools that have difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff?

**10** – We have tried to do learning via video-conferencing with a tutor at a local languages college. It was a disaster – she wasn't there/our students weren't there/the equipment failed and the whole time was wasted waiting for technical help/the material was too rigid and didn't suit the individual/the students hated the speaking part as the link was in our tiny school library with their peers from other subjects listening in.

**11** – Online learning has its place to play in the learning of MFL, as in the learning of any skill. However, the key work is 'skill'. If one makes an analogy with, say D&T, can online learning teach how to make a perfect dovetail joint in wood? Of course not: the practice at the skill is lacking. Speaking and writing are the active skills in MFL and they need a teacher present with the group.

**12** – As a passionate supporter of Languages for All I never thought I would say this but ...in a small number of cases I believe it is better not to teach languages than to teach them badly. In this respect, online provision would be preferable to being taught in a way which is detrimental not only to motivation for language learning but also to attitudes about the people who speak that language in their cultures.

**13** – The use of technology to replace qualified teachers is unlikely to be effective with any but committed students, not feasible in most schools, even if suitable materials existed

**14** – Such methods are only viable if equipment is readily available, suitably trained staff exist and pupils are motivated. Even then, there is no substitute for face to face contact – even video-conferencing does not even come close to achieving a similar effect: language involves so many non-verbal elements to be truly communicative (hence the difficulties of pupils listening to disembodied voices via a tape recorder!).

**15** – Online learning is suitable for adult learners, who are well motivated and often in a hurry. Unmotivated teenagers will not stick at this, I believe.

**16** – Online learning – only if all other resources are unavailable – could offer potential for motivated learners to learn a MFL at KS4. There would need to be careful guidance, however, on how to approach this relatively unfamiliar mode and some interaction potential for speaking (local centres?).

**17** – Pupils need personal interaction, which cannot be provided by online learning alone. If video-conferencing is not available pupils would not have this at all. It would also imply that language teachers were not needed if MFL can be taught solely online.

**18** – I did GCE A level German with no teacher (there was none available for a lone student at technical college). In these circumstances online help would have been very welcome. However, in normal circumstances, languages are learnt better through human communication.

**19** – Online learning to me assumes keen, enthusiastic learners who have already experienced success at a language. At the moment I feel that online courses are geared to adult learners.

**20** – Online learning, however, needs a large amount of investment in hardware and software and if online learning is to be always accessible, needs suitable technical support in case of breakdowns. Also, I would be very surprised if MFL teachers were given sufficient time to develop materials and current commercially produced material is generally of a poor standard.

**21** – A computer cannot interact in the same way that a teacher can with a student. A computer cannot introduce and practise orally with a student as well as a teacher (if it can at all). Language is all about communicating with PEOPLE.

**22** – This could work, but would depend entirely on how good the courses were and above all on how well students were supervised and guided – not easy if it is meant to be a remedy for lack of staffing!

**23** – I do not see where the motivation comes from to learn languages. This works against the whole idea of languages as communication. Could it also not become a means for some schools to push languages even more to the sidelines? Either teach a subject within the bounds of a structured course, or do not teach it at all. As a teacher of MFL, I would have no desire to work in a school, where I was just a “facilitator”, walking around checking that pupils had their computer on and were filling in worksheets, while listening to a disembodied voice! What is the point!

I do of course realise that at university level this is a way to provide a huge variety of languages. I am just not sure where the motivation or indeed the time can come from in the secondary school curriculum.

**24** – Viable at post-16 – still requires input from school based staff. Local initiatives using video-conferencing at KS4 have shown pupils enjoyed learning experience, made progress but missed individual contact with staff and felt this has a negative impact on learning.

**Comments – A6 The measures outlined will have a positive effect on KS3, as suggested**

**1** – The diversification of languages at KS3 is under threat.

**2** – Making it optional undermines the importance of MFL – some of my KS3 pupils are already commenting that MFL is not as important as the core subjects because of the proposal to make it optional.

**3** – We already have pupils in Y8 saying that they are not bothered about trying in French because they are not going to opt for it anyway!

**4** – Significant numbers of pupils will regard MFL as a temporary inconvenience, to be dropped at the end of KS3 – the status of MFL will decline in many schools. Even in a successful department like mine, the assumption by certain groups that they need not study beyond KS3 will impact upon the MFL curriculum.

**5** – The reverse is true. The disaffection among some students, which currently occurs at KS4, will spread to KS3 when students know that they can give up at the end of Y9. There is plenty of evidence of this among subjects which are currently optional beyond KS3.

### **Comments – A6 & A7**

**1** – Primary-age teaching of languages is in principle an excellent idea. Languages (almost always French, of course) are already taught to large numbers of primary age children from the age of 8 or earlier in the independent sector. Success depends on (a) good teaching in the primary stage and (b) good linking into secondary school courses, so that students don't go back to the beginning again. Generally speaking, independent schools have achieved this. The key question is then: can (a) and (b) be achieved across (almost) all maintained primary and secondary schools? Can it be staffed, and if so, by whom? If not, it is more likely that students will be put off MFL, not so enthused by it that they want to continue into KS4. The DfES 'Language Learning' summary mentions (a) (*Intro* p.1 para3) but says nothing about (b), yet it was the lack of continuity into secondary, as much as anything, that led to the collapse of the Nuffield Primary French Scheme in the 1970s. It is worth reminding people that, in the early '80s, not only were only about 35% going on with a modern foreign language in what is now KS4 (hardly an indication of great keenness for a non-compulsory subject) but many of the 65% who were giving up started to do so in effect as soon as the option choices were made, usually in the preceding spring term. And that was after the Nuffield Scheme.

### **Comments – A7 The introduction of languages in primary schools will lead to greater voluntary take-up in KS4, as suggested**

**1** – Only time will tell. More to the point – where are all the primary language teachers going to come from? We already have a shortage of language teachers, with new recruitment numbers not increasing significantly. Or does someone imagine KS4 teachers will simply move across to teach KS2?!!

**2** – Where are the teachers and funding for primary MFL to come from? There is no hint of a coherent national policy for primary MFL, so the effects will be as patchy as for the last 30 years.

**3** – My husband is a deputy head in a primary school. No-one on his staff could teach any FL. No-one wants to even try – all his staff feel they have enough to do and the primary curriculum is too full already – a not very positive start!

**4** – Surely language learning in KS2 will/should lead to accreditation at Y9; where will this leave KS4?

**5** – The Nuffield response asks the question: What is going to happen to the generation between now and 2020 when this starts to happen? Again this is built on

the myth of failure. Pupils in Y8 are capable of work in a foreign language, which was beyond them in English in KS2.

**6** – There will be a long delay in getting MFL delivered well in all primary schools so it will not affect secondary MFL take up for even longer. In the long term, if done well, it should enable pupils to progress further before KS4 than they do now. However, they might then feel that they have learned enough and would not need to take their languages further!

**7** – Ad hoc MFL provision at KS2 could and does lead to positive and negative pupil perceptions of MFL by the start of KS3. There is some excellent delivery in some primary schools. However, much primary MFL teaching is paid for by parents in ‘club’ type settings, there is a very wide range of teaching skills/materials used. We are unable to adequately staff KS3/KS4 provision nationally. What is going to be done to address our current staffing problems, let alone suggest KS2 provision for all? (I note that in the Green Paper most developments are subject to resources being made available.)

**8** – This sounds wonderful, but will it ever be done properly? This requires detailed, timetabled lessons taught, in my opinion, by linguists, not by overworked primary school teachers, having to do yet another subject. How about employing more teachers in a local secondary school and then having those teachers work in the feeder primary schools? Having talked with colleagues we would all consider it a benefit to be released from our timetable one day a week, in order to go and teach in one of our feeder primary schools. This would also provide continuity in the secondary school with pupils being taught by the same staff they had already met. I would love to see a greater take-up of languages, but if the introduction at KS1 and KS2 is to be an odd lesson here and there taught by unqualified staff, or just as worrying, graduates training to teach languages (cheap labour!) then it is a complete waste of time. Pupils should see it as a subject from the start, not as some “filler” which they come across every third Monday, when there is a spare hour on the timetable.

### **Comments – A8 With the increased space in the curriculum, more pupils will take up 2 languages**

**1** – What increased space? In our school we are constantly being told that we are having to squeeze too much into too small a space. Our MFL KS3 allocation is being reduced next year to accommodate the ‘need’ for numeracy, ICT, etc. – and again it seems the 2<sup>nd</sup> MFL will be consigned to the twilight zone in KS3 to make way for ... whatever the latest bright idea is. I fear that in a year’s time the comment will be ‘Look – MFL’s not popular, the take-up for the after-school classes is too low – so we’ll cut it completely’. Goodbye 2<sup>nd</sup> MFL. That will be a sad day for me in particular, since I was originally recruited/appointed specifically to expand MFL provision in our school by introducing German and at one time succeeded in introducing full Y7 diversification, with 50-50 French and German classes. This was abandoned 3 years ago – not for any sound MFL reasons – and the current move is another step backwards for MFL, almost to the position it was at in 1990 when I arrived.

**2** – We are a technology college. Dropping technology to study a language will not be an option. Schools are driven by targets and bids, not an educational goal.

**3** – I don't know what the basis for this statement is. In the early '80s, with a minimum of subjects compulsory in KS4, the percentage of maintained school students studying two MFL post-14 was at most 5%; the 15% sometimes quoted was of students studying their second MFL, usually after dropping their first (i.e. French). I think that, with one MFL now compulsory in KS4, the percentage studying two may actually be higher than 5%. Why should dropping compulsory languages raise this percentage?

**4** – Pupils will only take up more languages if their learning is positive from the start. Once again the approach to go out for French in the primary school is, to be honest, depressing and predictable, even though I do teach it. Why is the government going to spend so much money to train primary school teachers to do yet more French? There are trained MFL teachers out there. Just look in the secondary schools. Surely primary teachers are better left to what they do well. Are we once again going to ask them to take on more? If money is to be spent, train secondary school teachers to use teaching methods appropriate to KS1 and KS2.

#### **Comments – A8/9**

**1** – Reducing the status of MFL in KS4 is illogical in a subject area where continuity is vital. It also sends negative signals to an age group that is particularly subject to outside influences

#### **Comments – A9 These measures will increase numbers at A and AS level and in HE**

**1** – Even with the generally high performance at GCSE in independent schools, take-up post-16 is not necessarily good, which is quite a worry in many such schools. Wishful thinking, I'm afraid.

**2** – In my own form, talented linguists are dropping their languages to take PE, drama, media studies. By the time they take their A level choices, their options will be limited.

**3** – UK competence will only improve significantly if our government follows the European lead and makes languages compulsory from age 7/8 to Advanced level as a requirement for higher education.

#### **Comments – A10 The measures will have a positive effect on recruitment & retention of MFL teachers**

**1** – Recruitment and retention are part of a wider crisis in teaching. With more attractive opportunities available for the decreasing pool of native linguists in many other fields, it is difficult to see anything positive for potential MFL teachers in these proposals.

**2** – It is likely that by making KS4 MFL optional, there will be a reduced requirement for MFL teachers. It is possible that teaching only those at KS4 who have chosen to do MFL courses will make the job more manageable for many MFL teachers and positively affect retention.

**3** – Although the measures may improve the morals of some MFL teachers who feel that teaching MFL to pupils who have no interest or sometimes no capability to learn is not an effective use of their time, it will reduce yet further the number of linguists and dual linguists in the country. Good quality linguists will be sought after and

snapped up by high paying, high profile jobs and good language teachers will become even more difficult to recruit and retain in schools .

4 – The message is loud and clear. Languages are not important in the curriculum, and we haven't been doing a good enough job. Teacher retention?

5 – The increase in the employment of MFL teachers has been largely due to the expansion in the KS4 curriculum. Where are the opportunities going to be if some schools decide to cut provision at GCSE? Some schools are bound to use this as a way to cut back, certainly to go from two languages to one. I am already frustrated at how my own languages are not used. Although I teach French and German, I could also teach Spanish and Italian, but the curriculum is so full it does not offer the flexibility, not even to offer these at GCSE level to students in the sixth form. At secondary level I think these have to be time-tabled subjects. Pupils do not have the time outside their GCSE or A level demands to study another subject. There has to be a way of making them part of the normal timetable, while at the same time leading to a recognised qualification, even if this is not a GCSE.

#### **Comments – B1 A broader range of carefully developed alternative accreditation would improve motivation in KS4 and beyond**

1 – Be careful of non-communicative, learn-by-memory, no-grammar, transactional Graded Objectives-style campsite parrot French certificates.

2 – To run alongside GCSEs.

3 – I fear that there is something in the demanding nature of MFL learning which would not necessarily be tackled by this idea. If I compare the demands of some other subjects I can also see why MFL is 'hard' in the eyes of a lot of pupils. It is almost as if they have taken over the slot of Latin in the view of pupils – i.e. they have to remember material long-term and cannot see the immediate relevance of the information. I should, however, be curious to see what sorts of qualifications are being envisaged.

4 – There is already too much statutory assessment which interferes with planning and delivering long-term teaching programmes. Perhaps the most effective development of the past generation was the graded skills scheme.

#### **Comments – B1/B3**

1 – The biggest single problem is the disparity between GCSE languages and GCSE in other subjects. Of course some students who could perfectly well cope with GCSE MFL will give up in favour of 'easier' subjects if allowed to do so, and some heads, mindful of points scores, will encourage them! We urgently need GCSE which is less content-heavy, more accessible, more relevant to our pupils, including vocational elements, rather than continuing to see it as a preparation for A level and university study in a language.

#### **Comments – B2 An alternative GCSE requiring study of two languages to a lower level would improve motivation in KS4 and beyond**

1 – Some of us have been involved in graded tests, PCFLSW, FL AW, short course, certificate of achievement. The new 'gold standard' will still be 5 A\* -C for matriculation – a GCSE in MFL is worth something!

2 – Thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges! A favourite of the '70s and '80s, when it often meant failing in two languages instead of one. If the average attainment in both languages could be got to at least level 5 or 6, then students could have a fair basis for continuing post-16 if they wanted to – and if post-16 teaching took account of the lower level.

### **Comments – B3 GCSE should be changed in other ways**

1 – GCSE already needs changing to bring it more into line with what the National Curriculum was seeking, to say nothing of what boards' own criteria stipulate. In particular, ways should be found of bringing in, at the appropriate levels, important elements which are not at present examined at all, for example, independent reading (which could form part of the oral), "dealing with the unpredictable", "summarising and reporting the main points of spoken and written texts" ....It would also be a great improvement if in GCSE oral attainment were at least partly assessed over time during KS4, as I think still happens in Scotland at this stage.

2 – As a teacher of German in an HE institution who, year-on-year, witnesses declining numbers, declining student motivation and declining capabilities, I am profoundly pessimistic about the future of FL teaching in this county.

I remain unconvinced by government proposals for languages; this is yet another attempt to be seen to be doing something when, in reality, there is no proven strategy, no real vision and no effective will to make languages work.

Despite decades of reports, research, scholarship, experiment and changing practice relating to delivery of foreign languages, success remains elusive – and we fool ourselves if we believe otherwise. It is abundantly clear that, despite small - scale progress in this school or a headline-catching initiative in that, the holy grail of successful language learning remains as elusive as ever.

I believe we have to be far more radical if significant and lasting success is to be achieved. I would suggest two measures – both anathema to a conservative and self-deluding language community (of which I am part):

- 1 The hegemony of French must be broken. Far more pupils take holidays in Spain yet French remains the first language taught in British schools. No wonder pupils perceive FL teaching as irrelevant. French is rapidly becoming the Latin of my schooldays: taught because Latin teachers had to be employed and justified on the spurious grounds that it somehow helped with English (it did – but it was not necessary to teach it for five arduous years to achieve this). Research has been conducted (regret: source not to hand) indicating that out of French, German, Spanish and Italian the French language is the most difficult for English-speaking learners. And what language do we teach primarily in our schools? You've guessed: the most difficult.
- 2 Introduction of a 'user friendly' language at an early age (KS1/2) to boost confidence and to inculcate basic language principles is imperative. The designer language Esperanto is ideal: lack of irregularity, gender, etc., mean progress in Esperanto is swift and the language can be used from an early stage to create meaningful, trans-national contacts. The old *canard* that no-one speaks Esperanto can be laid to rest by typing 'Esperanto' into any internet search-engine. There is even an Esperanto 'virtual school' which unites learners from round the world.

I regret, however, there is probably as much chance of radical rethinking in language circles as there is of total restoration of that other circle, Stonehenge.

As a final thought: does government, at bottom, really want trans-national communication? I suspected during the xenophobic Thatcher years that the government actively discouraged contact via foreign languages lest the populace saw that transport, health and education, etc., were functioning better in other countries; that the jingoistic message purveyed by the Tory press was false. Has the situation changed under the Blair-regime? I suspect not – and therefore I take any government utterance about foreign languages *cum magno grano salis*

**3** – Many of the tasks students are asked to perform especially at KS4 are not relevant to their present lifestyle, skills or experiences. Some of them would be more valued if linked into the vocational courses e.g. business studies or travel/tourism. Otherwise I feel that the content of GCSE should become more ‘user friendly’.

**4** – The topics within the syllabus should be broken down into units, including grammar units. It should be possible to include a business/vocational unit, which covers the aspects of each topic, which would fulfil various business requirements, e.g. telephone skills within personal information, etc.

There should be 3 levels – Foundation, Intermediate & Higher, including vocational/business units at each level.

Students should be allowed to mix and match units at different levels across the skills, though some core units should be specific to each level.

Maybe the vocational/business units could be bonded into a separate ‘vocational’ qualification.

To take up AS level, certain, especially grammatical, units should be compulsory at Higher Level and also a certain overall standard achieved.

A certain overall mark could equate to a pass at the different levels, (& core units to that level).

It should not be possible to enter any one unit at more than one level at a time. It should be possible to re-sit.

The skills and areas of language covered at each level should be made clear to employers, so that they can provide job opportunities for students at all levels of language competence.

**5** – There are just too many topics to cover for the general conversation part of the speaking test. The bank of questions is huge and just too much to prepare, practise and learn.

**6** – I would prefer a greater distinction between Foundation and Higher levels i.e. between grade C and grade D.

**7** – GCSE needs to address the concerns of 15 -16 year old students. They need to work on topics which are interesting to them. Much of the transactional content of courses based on a visit to the areas where the language is spoken is perceived to be boring and irrelevant to students' daily lives.

**8** – After the first 2 years, languages should be adapted to course needs, e.g. humanities (with geographical and social terms), or scientific, or business, or engineering for example. These can be done at all levels.

**9** – I think GCSE needs radical change, but this has to be undertaken as part of a more general rethink of ALL of KS3 and KS4.

**10** – GCSE exams are not exams for students interested in language(s). They are too function-oriented and there is little in them to motivate students who are interested in how languages work and are constructed. If you think that most students who take GCSE exams have been learning a language for 5 years, then GCSE is quite frankly insulting – the listening paper alone is proof enough. This is one reason why AS/A2 is seen as being too hard. One reason why there are too few language teachers is because there are not enough people coming through our school to uni system who actually understand how languages work, relate to each other, are explained etc. and so they could never go on to teach them. GCSE has destroyed this side of language learning, which O level still catered for. Take an example in French: the past historic: French novels, short stories, papers etc. use this tense. You used to need to know it for O level. Now you scarcely need it for A level.

Students like learning the 'rules' – this helps them to feel safe. They know what they are doing. They get explanations and they understand patterns .

The current GCSE allows for too many grammatical areas to remain unexplored and unexplained, because the rewards are largely revolved around 'communication' – this is OK for some tourists, but not for serious users of a language.

The award of A\* is also dubious. Because of the way it is awarded, which is not the 'top 1%, say', but is more fixed, it effectively means A=B, B=C, C=D etc. It is not very fair on those students who get a 'C', but who really know very little of value or accuracy in the FL.

**11** – GCSE should be changed to allow for learner creativity (almost non-existent even in revised examination), less emphasis on topic/vocabulary accumulation and greater freedom for teachers to teach rather than be preoccupied with assessment in an ever-increasing range of forms.

**12** – The content needs reviewing. The contexts for language use in particular. Why does everyone have to be examined in reading and writing? Would a 'grammar' paper be such a bad thing for some? I think the NC PoS is good – represents a broad view of language learning – why isn't it more explicitly linked to GCSE specifications?

**13** – GCSE was a sop to the woolly-minded thinking of educationalists of the sixties and seventies. Education had to be egalitarian. GCE was too difficult for the masses; CSE did not present enough of a challenge to the 'grammar school cohort' whether they were in grammar schools or in comprehensives. So GCSE was invented – a dilution of two very different tests. It now lacks the intellectual

challenge, requirement for a thorough knowledge of language structures, the need to understand something of the history and culture of a country, necessary for stronger candidates to be able to attain fluency and further qualifications. It also lacks the support and format, which would help the less gifted linguists to achieve a worthwhile certificate in a skill in which they could demonstrate a practical, if not fluent, competence. So, in my opinion, GCSE should be completely reformed, not merely revised to introduce/abolish target language rubrics, dictionaries and grammar. We must escape from the 'phrase book' mentality of the present GCSE.

**14** – GCSE has become too grammar-based for less-able pupils. There should be recognitions for those who are keen, interested but can't manage tense formation and sentence structures.

Something based on the transactional/old graded test approach for a Foundation level GCSE would be more appropriate and could be slanted to a vocational approach – old RSA certificate in basic language competence.

**15** – I think the problem with GCSE has been its content. Although describing one's bedroom for when one goes to France is a valid idea, it does little to counter the statement, "I'm never going to France". Also the content is far too 'girl-friendly' which, in a subject that has trouble in attracting boys, is unfortunate to say the least. A major rethink of the purpose of GCSE and its link to A level or vocational qualifications is necessary.

**16** – I am deeply concerned about the amount of content in the new GCSE. We follow the AQA linear syllabus for German (and French) and theme 4 is a nightmare: incorporating environmental issues, citizenship etc. There won't be enough time to cover these themes, as well as the standard transactional ones, and all the grammar in a course lasting 2 years 2 terms (German). When (not 'if') students do badly in 2003 they will not opt at AS level for languages. I feel there is now too much to cover for GCSE and yet even that doesn't prepare them for AS/A2.

N.B. We have found AS level to be really de-motivating. Students ask why other subjects are so much easier to do well in and why can't languages AS/A2 be more realistic.

**17** – Current GCSE is a strong demotivating factor. Bring back a structure like the original SEG modular scheme. It was a great motivator for the average and below and its oft-cited deficiencies with the more able were due to lack of challenge and rigour in teaching, not in testing. It had more of the authenticity promised in GCSE than any of the current crop.

**18** – Increased flexibility.

Applied GCSE or other qualification i.e. lang. qualification with a skill.

Syllabus content change – more relevant to needs of young people.

Opportunity to have less emphasis on writing and more on communication e.g. texting, email, spell checking. N.B. I feel very strongly that we SHOULD be teaching grammar & structure to liberate kids and prepare them for further language study rather than creating parrots.

**19** – I am extremely disappointed by the new specifications for GCSE and feel that there has been an amount of dishonesty on the part of somebody, somewhere. I had understood that the approach was to become more grammatical but the content

of the vocab/areas to be covered would be reduced. In reality I can establish no such reduction. The demands of the old syllabus have simply been reworded in more general terms with no reduction in vocabulary and the fourth theme has also been added, moving the work towards AS level. In the very limited time on the curriculum allowed for MFL, in particular for FL2, it will be impossible to cover the whole syllabus well. Pupils often complain that they get more homework from MFL than they do from other subjects and this will simply make matters worse.

A genuine reduction in the volume of content would be a big advantage – to the extent of removing the fourth theme in the AQA syllabus altogether. If there are schools who can cope with more in the time required then they could be accommodated by AS level.

**20** – The GCSE examination does need to address the needs of the higher candidates who are neither motivated nor challenged by the topic approach. It is this group that we hope to attract to do further study. However, this has continued to make the transfer to A/S and A level study difficult. To many pupils, the study of languages becomes almost a different subject and within a few months they are expected to move away from transactional dialogue to issue based discussion. For many this is a difficult and alien experience, for which GCSE has in no way prepared them for.

**21** – Should be options for languages and business etc. Syllabus is soul - destroyingly boring. Kids end up with lots of vocabulary on irrelevant topics (lost property, railways, buying petrol at a garage and attendant (!) etc. but no time to gain grammatical mastery, play with the language, explore interesting aspects of the culture.

**22** – There should be less reliance on memory skills – more open-ended tasks – less prescription, e.g. – too wide a range of topics for speaking tests role-play. Pupils should know what topics may be tested – e.g. selection of 6. Topics are irrelevant to pupils' interests. Need to be more challenging in terms of content.

**Comments – B4 There should be a slimmed-down compulsory 'core' PoS deliverable through a number of courses, as is proposed for science**

**1** – Depends on full range of options to be available.

**2** – The programmes of study have already been slimmed down considerably (and beneficially, I think). If they were slimmed down further, it could only be by omitting things, which any language study should include. (In fact, because programmes of study are not directly examined, many items are already neglected, to the detriment of students' learning.)

**Comments - B2, B3, B4 and B6**

**1** – The Royals Schools of Music Grades idea could, if developed sensibly, offer a much more positive approach to assessing MFL for those uninterested in or unlikely to obtain A\*-C at GCSE. Unfortunately, the emphasis on higher grades at GCSE has rendered the grades below C valueless for most, even though they may reflect a pupil's best efforts and ability.

Some element of MFL should be included in the vocational areas – e.g. as a module in courses for leisure and tourism, hotel and catering, engineering and

manufacturing, business etc. More emphasis on the cultural knowledge relevant to working with people from other cultures might improve attitudes and trade!

**Comments – B5 A language qualification at a certain level should be required for the award of the proposed Advanced Matriculation Diploma**

1 – I should like to see an MFL qualification as a basic requirement for entrance to university.

**Comments – B5/B6**

1 – Our European partners/competitors do not allow students to drop languages at age of 14. I have been encouraging inclusion/acceptance of need to learn MFL since I joined the profession in 1974. No doubt some 'purists' will decry comprehensive inclusion. What are we thinking about, allowing these changes to even be considered? I spent 9 years teaching adults, almost all of whom had been secondary modern pupils, deemed incapable of learning a MFL. Please do something to stop this awful, retrograde move.

I am HoD in a large, successful comprehensive school, I have grave concerns about the reaction of curriculum managers in my school. I can only imagine what the situation must be like in schools where the powers that be have a less enlightened view of MFL provision and a list of different priorities.

Thank you on behalf of the ordinary MFL teachers in my school who work extremely hard to bring opportunities to young people.

**Comments – B6 A language should be compulsory in some advanced and intermediate vocational courses**

1– Pupils have already been allowed to drop a language in years 10 & 11, picking it up again could (a) deter them from taking the course; (b) cause difficulties for staffing – which language should be offered? Especially if pupils applying for the course have done different languages. It depends on the courses – leisure & tourism lends itself well to a language component.

2 – Why are vocational courses presented as automatically excluding a language?

3 – Yes, some vocational courses should contain some foreign language where appropriate. The question doesn't imply that students will have to choose those particular courses and let's be honest, there are plenty of youngsters for whom language learning is successful and a turn-on and who would be happy to see their language learning put in a relevant vocational context. We're too ready to believe that language learning is somehow a failure, when the real problem is that we, as adults, are nationally complexed about our languages. I see hundreds of successful learners.

4 – This school teaches the new travel and tourism qualification and can see no need for students to study a foreign language to complement it. Dover Tourist Information Centre is staffed by French, German and Italian nationals – QED?

## Part X Green Paper questionnaire – general comments

### 1 - Primary school MFL

As a former peripatetic teacher of French in Somerset I visited the 6 primary schools in the catchment area of a comprehensive. I did this for 5 years. It was the best period of my whole career. Yes, younger children learn languages readily but it takes very skilful teaching to maintain the momentum over a number of years and over the transition to secondary education. From experience, I believe that the latest plans to introduce languages in primary schools have not been thought through sufficiently, even assuming sufficient teachers to teach MFL.

### New GCSEs for 2003

Having recently attended seminars on the new exams, I am appalled at what is on offer. I can only conclude that the government doesn't really want pupils to succeed at GCSE in languages. I believe that the new format will work against my pupils, they will not be motivated to do well, it will not produce good classroom methodology, (a good exam would do that) and above all, it will not produce vibrant and confident linguists who enjoy their work and want to continue beyond 16 with their studies.

All in all, I feel as if I've wasted my entire career. Sorry to go on, but I believe passionately that all children deserve the chance to learn a MFL on a proper structured course

2 – I am desperately attempting to find something optimistic or positive to cling to re: modern languages. I am trying to avoid the recurring thought that – at least in Scottish state schools – they are slowly dying. The position in some of the better independents may still be somewhat better, I suppose, but probably not a lot. In 32 years of teaching French/Spanish I remain enthusiastic, having witnessed a lot of change, although the position of languages in the curriculum is as fragile and precarious as ever – even more so, as 'success' is measured in terms of quantity now, instead of quality. Bums on seats. But the failure of "Languages for All" in Scotland is nothing if not a symptom of a far deeper malaise in Scottish society – probably something along the lines of increasing impatience with "delayed gratification" – the patience and application needed to learn a language as a long-term commitment, not a "quick fix" as SQA Modules would try to have you believe. What's the answer? I do not know.

3 – For me the priorities should be:

(1) Raising standards and improving opportunities at KS3 (A6). The current situation in our local schools is alarming. We have two 9-13 middle schools offering only French in Years 6-8 (very limited opportunities in Year 6, one hour per fortnight in one school). The standard of teaching and learning is varied, ranging, in my estimation, from the competent to the poor. Some pupils join us in Year 9 with negative attitudes fostered by poor learning experiences. Proposals to introduce MFL at a younger age seem sensible but it will be essential to recruit enough competent teachers to deliver this successfully. At present too many pupils are 'failing' at KS3 and this creates enormous problems in KS4. At whatever age MFL learning starts we need to ensure that our pupils are being offered good learning experiences and this will only be achieved if we have enough teachers. We need to train more teachers to work effectively with younger learners. I welcome the idea that we start teaching languages earlier in KS2 and believe that it is essential for the future health of language learning that we give our pupils a better start before KS4.

(2) Improving courses at KS4 to make them more relevant to pupils' needs and interests.

There are enormous problems at the present time in KS4. To address these we need to:

- a) raise standards at KS3 so that more pupils are equipped to tackle KS4 successfully. (See above – start younger, recruit more teachers, give MFL a higher profile as currently given to literacy and numeracy.)
- b) change the content of GCSE to make it less repetitive of KS3 experiences. How many times can you make 'today we are going shopping in France' interesting? We need to cover topics of intrinsic interest to pupils. To achieve this we need to teach the basics better in KS3 and to give pupils a better knowledge of the language earlier so that they can tackle more interesting material in KS4.

I do not believe that the issue of whether MFL should be compulsory or not at KS4 is the key issue. At the present time we are forcing a number of pupils into KS4 courses for which they are ill-prepared. In Years 10 and 11 they are expected to cover broadly the same ground they failed to master in KS3. Much of the work is remedial work and there is little sense of progress. There is not point in taking a KS4 course unless KS3 has been a productive and beneficial experience. We should be ambitious and attempt to reach learners of all abilities and to continue to offer good courses to all learners in KS4 and beyond. If KS3 is successful learners will make their own choices and opt for MFL in KS4. It is pointless and painful to both teachers (I know, I carry the scars!) and learners to pile failure on failure.

**4 – You asked for my comments. Here they are.**

- a) I feel very strongly that current practice in MFL is not encouraging the development of good linguists. Part of the reason for this is that the current approach puts a great deal of emphasis on spoken language and ritualistic language. Although this is essential, I believe that it is only one aspect of linguistic competence. I also believe that the current oral approach leads to greatly impoverished input for the learners.
- b) I would like to see a new emphasis on reading. It would be very easy to do this using the internet as a central resource.
- c) Parallel to this, I would like to see greatly increased vocabulary targets for GCSE (and for A level). The current de facto targets of about 200 words a year are simply too small to allow the development of a self-sustaining active vocabulary.

**5 – Further remarks to accompany the questionnaire.**

1) The Minister's comment when questioned by David Frost "we're not very good at it" is fallacious and insulting. The number of MFL teachers who have gone to other careers or who cannot get teaching jobs is still considerable. "We are not very good" at supporting Europe either in the press or in parliament. That is the real issue. Neither are we "very good" at supporting staff who struggle to give students a European experience – no support for applying for funding nor for risk assessment – I have organised six 'sleepless' exchanges, so I know.

2) Despite all this, for the first time, I have AVCE students telling me of their disappointment at not being able to continue French/Spanish and being forced to learn German for professional reasons. This year we have been able to band the

NVQ German students across one AVCE course – the results have been positive across the whole curriculum, not just German.

3) We have adults who come to the language centre to use IT packages when they cannot attend evening classes – they rarely keep coming without our support – what chance for KS4 students?

4) QCA have forced many to adopt GCSE coursework – the students do not absorb the underpinning grammar and find the new AS a nightmare. What chance for those who choose an AS after an absence of two years from language learning?

5) Where are the teachers coming from to teach primary languages? I have spent many hours this year trying to get teachers for FE. Will foreign nationals be able to cope with the administrative demands of primary education as it now is?

6) Businesses are finding it harder to fund language courses especially after 11<sup>th</sup> Sept. Individuals are finding it harder to hold down a job and sustain regular attendance at an evening class. Most of our retention problems are linked to this.

This is an ineffectual response to a difficult problem. The Minister clearly does not want us to sell and be competitive in Europe. Why don't we just become another state of the USA?

PS – A reduction in generating the endless statistics required by HM Government would improve my teaching – my contracted 39 hours a week are fulfilled by Weds. pm or Thursday am every week. How can we be 'very good at it?' Maybe it is the Minister who is 'not very good at it.' Why should she then pass the blame to the thousands of MFL teachers who are?

**6** – I have filled in the questionnaire as best I can and add the following comments: We are a tertiary college in NE Lancs, being the sole post -16 provider in Lancashire district 13. We have an overall A level pass rate which is well above national averages and in MFL have 100% in French and German A and AS for the past 2 years and Spanish AS 100% in 2001. However, we suffer from dwindling numbers; the new AS has not improved our take-up. All groups are currently below 10, which does not please our funding masters. The move by Estelle Morris to remove compulsory MFL can only seal our fate.

Having taught in a secondary school for many years I can also see the other side of the coin – the relief at not having to teach unmotivated teenagers. I feel the move is a backward step, will disadvantage further our youngsters in the job market but I am sure it will solve our MFL specialist teacher shortage admirably!

We have held language events, taken out a language 'roadshow' to local schools, sent out publicity materials, produced a languages CD-ROM – all sorts of things to attract students to languages – I am running out of steam fast and now this blow by our Secretary of State!

**7** – Ironically, since I completed the questionnaire during the Easter holidays the SMT at my 11-16 comprehensive in Rochdale has decided to disapply the pupils the department had considered to be Foundation level candidates. The Higher level candidates have raised no objections to this, which I feel is very pleasing.

After talking to MFL teachers across the borough it would seem that one of the consequences of the Green Paper has been to create a sense of insecurity amongst MFL teachers as to the long term stability of their positions. As HoD I am aware that my current 4 management points will be reduced to 2 in a couple of years' time unless I am willing to take on responsibilities unrelated to my subject discipline. In fact I have seen the writing on the wall and have voluntarily (and very happily) down-shifted in order to let someone else deal with the inevitable hassle the changes will create

Yet again, I feel that MFL teachers, representative of all teachers, have done their utmost to enhance the attractiveness and purpose of studying their subject only to be knocked back thanks to a shortsighted political concern, i.e. that of inadequate numbers of available teachers. In my school, a thriving department until a couple of months ago has now changed into an anxious, uncertain group of staff who feel that they and their subject are once again under-valued. It is difficult to know what to do to boost morale.

**8** – I work in Wales where the % of pupils overall who take a MFL at GCSE level is pitiful. The % of pupils taking a MFL at A level is even worse and is deteriorating in the wake of AS.

However, when I worked in my previous school as Head of the faculty of Welsh and modern languages, nearly 80% of the pupils in our comprehensive school opted for MFL at KS4.

Since taking VER I now work part-time in another comprehensive school where 100% of the pupils do one or two MFLs at KS4. 98% successfully achieve GCSE and a small % gain high grades in the CoEA exam.

In my current school **all** pupils study French in years 7 and 8 (3 lessons per week). In year 9 **all** pupils study German and French (French 2 lessons per week, German 1 lesson per week).

At KS4 level all pupils opt either to study French or German or to study both French and German at GCSE/CoEA level.

MFLs are popular, are readily accepted by our pupils who in addition also study for GCSE Welsh.

The system works well and is highly successful in terms of pupil motivation and GCSE results. The Faculty is fully staffed and is expanding to meet the needs of high numbers at AS/A level.

My colleagues and I are therefore appalled at the contents of the Green Paper. It denies everything I have striven for in MFL teaching over the past 38 years from Nuffield MFL national initiatives to the modern day.

I personally am most grateful to ALL for all the work and responses it is making to overthrow or improve the negativity of the current Green Paper. Never before have we needed more competent linguists at all levels and I wish you well in your ongoing struggle to promote the position of MFLs in our schools

**9** – I believe this Green Paper to show how education Ministers' careers matter more in our culture of change management than educational considerations. Constant change is the real enemy of successful language teaching: we have another 'new 'improved GCSE product, new AS/A2. We (here) have adopted A2 coursework and AS/A2 modular approach with mainly new content and text books. Then our uneducated education Minister wants to pull the plug on the perceived status of MFL teaching nationally. This against a background of, in my school at least, SUCCESS: we have 38-50 wanting to take an AS French in a school of 700. Plus 24 Spanish & 12-16 German & 2 Russian. Plus most attain 2 MFL GCSEs (one optionally). Last year 51% of our GCSE results were A\*. Without the compulsory status, fewer pupils would do what is, in fact, good for them. If only education were to be treated like the Bank of England, and set (almost) free.

**10** – I am HoD of our all-boys comprehensive. Languages were made compulsory about 8-9 years ago and after initial doubts, this has worked well, with all pupils expecting to do a language at KS4.

Three years ago we took the decision that GCSE for all was not a good option for the lowest ability pupils and so we offer certificate of achievement in French and German to two small groups, roughly 10 boys in each. The rest of the year all do GCSE, in either French or German.

Next September a small number will be disapplied from languages, so that they can do a vocational course. This will mean, for the first time in almost ten years, that some pupils at my school at KS4 will have no language element to their KS4 studies. I wonder whether this is the thin end of the wedge; of course, I will be watching closely!

I am worried about the perceived and real difficulties of language, especially at KS4 & 5. I believe we make excessive demands on pupils, both in the breadth of language, but also in the complexity of tasks. ('Nicht in Text' I feel is particularly difficult; speaking for 4 mins. without anything more than bullet points is a skill that many native speakers of that age would find difficult, and then you have to make sure you mention a past and a future!)

I feel that all of this is adding to the difficulty of languages and so making it easier to drop at KS4. I feel very strongly that AS is too demanding in its present form; in my school there has been a significant rise in pupils opting for AS and then a dramatic fallout for A2.

I am very concerned about primary languages. In principle I accept that it is a good idea, but it needs to be thought through. We have 17 feeder primaries; there is an all girls' school in the town, which offers French and Spanish. We offer French and German. Which languages should be taught at KS2? Half an hour a week for 1 year will give only a slight grounding – to be really effective it needs to be started earlier and half an hour a day!! Primary teachers with a bit of holiday French can do much for motivation and interest, but they can also do great harm, especially in terms of pronunciation. It needs to be properly thought out and for this money is important, but also time.

Thank you for giving me a chance to air my views. In Cheshire there is at the moment no advisor and no forum for discussion at all. Other things are deemed far more important than a subject specialist.

**11** – We have found AS level to be really demotivating. Students ask why other subjects are so much easier to do well in and why can't languages AS/A2 be more realistic.

As a classroom teacher and Head of department I feel passionately that languages are vital. However, for students to really become pro-languages we need a huge promotional campaign. Making them optional has given out all the wrong signals to students and their parents. Students will opt for subjects which seem easiest and unfortunately languages do not fit into this category.

**12** – We have turned our MFL round since Languages for All: 35 -40% A-C to 67-69% A-C. We have done this in part by embracing Languages for All and by 100% inclusion. Previously numbers of children had been taken out because it was considered that they couldn't cope!

Since Languages for All we have never used disapplication but this has been a struggle at times – challenging perceptions. We see no justification for disapplication from MFL. Would we disapply from science and maths?? Less fortunate or less able children should be given equal rights to skills which could well enhance their career opportunities and broaden their horizons. MFL teaching and learning enhance skills in other areas, notably understanding of function of 1<sup>st</sup> language.

We believe that our school will encourage language study but taking MFL out of core will nevertheless reduce numbers, putting more children at a disadvantage linguistically compared to their counterparts in other European countries.

**13** – The idea of offering languages to 7 year olds does not seem to have been linked to the 14-19 proposals. This is a clear example of lack of long-term strategy and 'joined-up thinking'. I feel strongly that KS 2 (or earlier) languages is a very good idea, but needs to be organised so that it is properly organised and funded. I would not be against making a language optional in KS4 **IF** and **ONLY** if it were compulsory at KS3 and taught by qualified, dedicated and experienced language teachers within an agreed framework, i.e. so that there was a smooth transition from KS2 to KS3, i.e. not a few tasters for some, a bit of French for others, followed by a 'fresh start', say, with German, French or Spanish at KS3.

**14** – I would add that both pupils and teachers of MFL need flexibility and motivation. As a teacher of MFL I am frustrated at the current situation, which limits an effective use of my own capabilities as a linguist. The government must concern itself with the motivation of those already in the profession, as well as those who will enter it in the future. In the past two years, having taught for ten years now, I have considered and still do consider leaving the profession, as it is not giving me the challenges I want as a teacher of MFL. This is clearly not the aim of the Green Paper, as these proposals need the support of teachers like myself to put a new face on language teaching in the coming years.

#### **Addition to Comment S3, point 5**

Copy of first page of a 4 page report sent to acting headteacher and senior members of staff.

Re: KS4 curriculum models A, B and C

I am writing in response to the draft curriculum models for next year recently circulated to Heads of department and pastoral Heads

You will recall our conversation on 30/11/01 during which I referred to my concern that in all 3 KS4 curriculum models MFL had been removed from the core and placed in the option system. I stated that I believed that this was 'illegal', that individual pupils could be disapplied from studying MFL but not a whole year group.

At our meeting I indicated that I would be contacting the Principal Advisor for the LEA, to seek clarification on this point and I have since received the attached communication from him. You will note his fax clearly states '**MFL remains part of the National Curriculum at KS3 and KS4. This applies to all pupils except those disapplied under Section 363... The regulations state that it (i.e. disapplication) should be applied to individual cases, not to whole cohorts of pupils. It is for the governors of the school to determine the curriculum. If they disregard statutory requirements, it is not technically 'illegal'. An OFSTED inspection would use the term 'non-compliant with the National Curriculum' and the inspection team would require the school to address the issue in its post-OFSTED action plan.'**

I have also attached information on regulations governing disapplication from QCA. It is clearly stated there is a **statutory** requirement to study design and technology, a modern foreign language and science. Disapplication of **individual pupils** in those subjects is allowed for specific purposes only, i.e.

- work-related learning
- to allow pupils making significantly less progress than their peers to study fewer National Curriculum subjects in order to consolidate their learning.
- in response to their individual strengths and weaknesses, to allow pupils to emphasise a particular curriculum area by exchanging National Curriculum subjects for further courses in that curriculum area.

In view of the points made above I would expect all 3 KS4 curriculum models to be redrafted in order to ensure MFL is in the core, **not** the option system.

- **All** staff in the MFL department were concerned that **not one** of the KS4 curriculum models had MFL in the core, which suggested that decisions had already been made and senior staff were not prepared to listen to or act upon comments made by MFL staff.

## Part XI Additional evidence from schools

From informal discussion list:

1. "We are an 11-16 comprehensive school with slightly above average results, a slightly above average catchment area and a successful MFL department. On Friday our head told me that we will have to teach our second MFL before and/or after school (instead of two timetabled lessons in Years 8 and 9...I was also told that MFL will only be one of the options at KS4 in future – what is happening in other schools? How can we guarantee that most of our more able pupils will continue with a foreign language up to at least 16?" (Sunday 5 May)

2. "I had a similar conversation with our headteacher a few weeks ago and managed to fight off 'option' status at least for a year. The problem seems to be largely to do with perception: when I spoke to HoDs of different subject areas, they said they would have jumped at the chance of losing disaffected learners obliged to study their subject at KS4, but as an MFL teacher I shudder at having the entitlement removed. Our students are below average, as is our catchment area, and our results are not something I am proud of, but in the last 3 years we have made great strides in getting a qualification, be it GCSE, Certificate of Achievement or Youth Award, for just about everyone leaving at the end of KS4. We are now working on the results side of things, but it's a long slog when we don't have parity on the curriculum: we've only had 1 hour a week at KS4 for the last 3 years. Not only do we lose out on the time allocation, but also students have us pretty low down their list of 'must do's' given homework pressures from just about every other subject (coursework isn't really realistic in 1 hour!) What we do therefore is try and find other ways to get through to the students and get/keep them on our side." (Monday 6 May 2002)