



Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL Cymru's) Response to Making Languages Count: A National Modern Foreign Languages Strategy

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers represents over 160,000 education professionals across the four constituent parts of the United Kingdom. It draws its membership from teachers and lecturers, leaders and support staff in maintained and independent schools, and Further Education Colleges. As well as campaigning vigorously to protect and enhance members' pay and conditions ATL also believes that the education profession has a key role in developing education strategy and policy. ATL Cymru represents over 6,500 education professionals in colleges and schools across the whole of Wales.

ATL Cymru welcomes this consultation document. We believe that the WAG is right to seek to address the issue of language learning strategically rather than focussing on separate elements. We would stress the need for language teaching to be transformed to make it motivating for pupils so we have young people who are able to converse confidently in another language. We would hope to see sufficient funding made available to match this ambition and make it a reality.

ATL Cymru welcomes the WAG's extension of teaching modern foreign languages to Primary school children. If teaching modern foreign languages is to be extended to key stage 2 pupils the involvement of secondary staff in those classes would be essential. The advent of PPA time could be used to facilitate this constructively- but there will be funding implications in the release of secondary staff for this purpose, unless some reciprocal mechanism can be devised.

The question of whether the provision of modern foreign languages should be a statutory requirement at key stage 2 must be carefully considered. Making the teaching of modern foreign languages at key stage 2 compulsory possibly isn't the right answer if past WAG initiatives involving compulsion are to be used as examples. The consultation highlights that the overall percentage of 15 year olds entered for a foreign language GCSE has fallen across Wales since 2002. Our members have highlighted that modern foreign languages are already being crammed into an already burdensome curriculum. At present some secondary

schools can only offer three optional subjects at GCSE, the rest of the timetable is full of compulsory subjects, one of which is Welsh. Few pupils choose to study a modern foreign language as a result.

The consultation makes reference to community languages such as Bengali but these languages do not appear to be given the same status as modern foreign languages within the strategy as a whole. Why is this the case since pupils from these language communities have a linguistic skill advantage which should be recognised and given equal status wherever possible? ATL is not sure that there is a need to make a distinction between different languages which are classified as either Modern (high status) or Community (lower status), believing that each and every language should be accorded the same status within the strategy. Access and active support for community language learning is an essential component of the inclusion agenda.

Contact:

Dr Philip Dixon
Director, ATL Cymru
Tel: 02920 465 000
Email: cymru@atl.org.uk