

ALL German Committee: the current position regarding the recruitment of teachers of German in schools in England

Following reports from schools of difficulties in recruiting teachers of German, the ALL German Committee discussed the problem.

Here are some of the points which arose in their discussions:

Insufficiently qualified candidates

There were several instances reported:

- A school wanting a Head of Languages did not receive enough applications, and none had sufficient experience. The post went to a teacher with 18 months teaching experience. (This has turned out to be a good appointment, the HoD has promoted German and this year there is a large AS German group, but none for French or Spanish.)
- It is increasingly difficult to fill senior level posts. A Director of Languages post in Essex was advertised twice and then only three interview candidates.
- In response to an advert for a Head of German in a secondary school, no one suitable applied.
- There were only two applicants for a Head of French post which pays about £6000 tlr (and therefore is on the higher levels of pay for a second in department).
- There are particular difficulties in getting teachers who can teach French and German to AS and A2 level – especially dual linguists.
- The Oxford University PGCE course leader reports a lot of candidates competing for NQT posts. There are often 60 to 70 applicants per job. (This, however, may be a reflection of how few jobs there are available.) Other areas of the country, however, report poor fields for NQT posts. And even then the applicants are not always of a high calibre.
- But the problem applies to other subjects also. A school in Oxfordshire could not appoint a Head of English as only one candidate applied; another school had only one applicant for Head of Physics.

Other careers are more attractive

It seems that the best German students are going into other careers, with more lucrative salaries and better status. People are often put off by the discipline and motivation problems reported in schools.

The status of German in the curriculum

Examination results in German tend to be lower than in other subjects. Head teachers want subjects in the curriculum which will improve their school's performance in the league tables.

The languages being taught in primary schools are largely French or Spanish. One 6th Form College reported that only one of their feeder schools now offers German to GCSE.

A contributor to the *mflresources* forum reported:

“It really doesn't surprise me that there are sadly so few applicants as across the country, German has been completely downgraded. It is quite ridiculous really as Germany is our main trading partner within Europe and Britain has an economic need for graduates of German as well as the other languages.

Some schools are opting to teach Spanish rather than German. It could be that Spanish is viewed as an ‘easier’ language, or that it is more appealing because Spain is a popular holiday destination.”

The financial implications of moving schools

There is still a difference in cost of living around the country, which may deter teachers from changing location.

The financial situation in the country and the cutting of middle manager posts across the country means that colleagues are considerably more careful when applying for a post that increases their salary by only 4 or 5 thousand pounds.

However, teachers may be unaware of the lack of qualified people applying for posts, and may not realize that they would be in with a good chance themselves and therefore don't even bother to apply.

Teacher training

Institutions we have spoken to report very few applications for German, but too many for French and Spanish.

German in Higher Education

If there are fewer pupils in school doing German, there will be fewer doing German at university. A number of German departments in universities have been closed down because of lack of numbers, or on financial grounds. In consequence there will be even fewer German teachers available in future years.