

Message from Karl Pfeiffer, ALL President, and Bernardette Holmes, ALL President Elect:

Re. Ofsted report 2011-01-17

The Ofsted report, Modern Languages, Achievement and Challenge 2007 - 2010 could not have come at a more propitious time! Hot on the heels of the Government White Paper, The Importance of Teaching, we now have a strong evidence base on which to build for the future.

The latest Ofsted report which highlights the strengths and weaknesses from a survey of primary, secondary and post-16 language provision brings very welcome news about the introduction of primary languages, reporting good progress overall, with achievement in just under six out of ten primary schools as good or outstanding. It is no surprise that for the moment the emphasis tends to be on speaking and listening but it is exciting to read that there are also good examples of systematically planned reading, even though these were rare. What is even more significant is the rich contribution that has been made by the Key Stage 2 Framework for Languages, which is providing a robust conceptual framework for language learning and intercultural understanding from primary into secondary schools, underpinned by knowledge about language and language learning strategies.

As we await the government's announcement about the imminent curriculum review which will decide the future of primary languages, we can be reassured that the cornerstone of the National Strategy for Languages launched in 2002 has been firmly set in place with just under three out of four primary schools in the survey using their own class teachers to teach a language and with clear plans for sustainability embedded in school planning. **We agree with Ofsted that the most pressing issue now is how to maintain sufficiently robust support nationally and locally to consolidate all that has been achieved and assure that prior learning is taken into account at all points of transition.**

The report highlights much more mixed fortunes for secondary languages. The Association for Language Learning has continued to voice its concern over the diminishing numbers of students taking a language post 14, which now stands at 44%. However, we would like to congratulate all the teachers and students who have contributed to the increase in GCSE entries awarded grades A*- C in French, German and Spanish. This is an achievement which we should celebrate. The central worries emerging from the latest report are that there are still far too few boys continuing with a language and that despite examples of outstanding practice and achievement, speaking, a key issue at the time of the previous report, remains weak. Reading is also underdeveloped and there is plainly a need for revitalising links with native speakers to provide a purpose for real communication. Assessment remains problematic in both primary and secondary schools.

The key message from Ofsted is in the title, there are achievements and there are and will continue to be many challenges ahead. The Ofsted report provides invaluable insights into the current situation within our schools and does not hold back on revealing 'the good, the bad and the ugly' which characterise language learning at this time.

ALL remains as keen as ever to support the languages community at this critical point in language policy reform and will not hesitate to take forward the recommendations within the Ofsted report by providing opportunities for its members to share good practice and learn from what works.

Please keep in touch with us through your local branches and networks and let us know how we can help or contact us directly on info@all-languages.org.uk. **The time for action is now.**