



PRESS RELEASE

The Coalition Government has set out wide ranging plans for school reform in its long awaited Schools White Paper, 'The Importance of Teaching', published 24th November 2010. Much of what's in the Schools White Paper has been leaked in advance, so the proposals come as no real surprise and in ideological terms are very much what one might expect from the Coalition Government: greater freedom for schools, with more money directed at the front line and in the control of head teachers, an emphasis on traditional academic subjects, a slimmed down curriculum, a return to "linear" examinations. As promised there is a proposal to introduce an English Baccalaureate – an additional award for students who achieve five GCSEs in academic subjects – and the decision to reform performance tables to include this broader set of core knowledge.

Bernardette Holmes, President Elect of ALL, said in an interview earlier today, "ALL welcomes the emphasis in the White Paper on the importance of language teaching and learning at secondary level. An English Baccalaureate will certainly support a revival of language teaching at Key Stage 4, particularly for the more able pupils. Since languages became optional in 2004, ALL has consistently voiced its serious concern about the number of pupils dropping languages at the end of Key Stage 3, including many high attaining students. However, it is also our firm belief that pupils of all abilities should have opportunities to learn languages throughout their school education and we fear that some young people could be further marginalized if there is no firm policy to support languages for all. We are also concerned that the outstanding achievements of primary teachers in introducing a language into the Key Stage 2 curriculum have not as yet been recognized in the White Paper. We are keen to hear the Government's plans for primary languages in the new curriculum. We heartily endorse greater autonomy for teachers and the freedom to make decisions as close to the point of learning as possible, but we must avoid fragmentation. Decentralisation can lead to isolation. There will be an urgent need to retain coherence of provision and a national,

regional and local structure for communication will be crucial. The Association plainly has a key role to play in supporting the languages community.”

There has been a lot of rhetoric around teacher autonomy and professionalism in the run-up to this White Paper. If the Government is serious about its vision of “teachers taking greater control over what is taught in schools, innovating in how they teach and developing new approaches to learning”, then this is a vision that ALL shares and will do all it can to support. Kathy Wicksteed, national lead on behalf of ALL for LinkedUp scheme (an initiative of the Links into Languages consortium in which ALL is a founder member) commented, “The LinkedUp scheme has shown us how much can be done to make language learning exciting and effective when teachers are given a little time and money to work together on new ideas. Teachers have the answers and it will be fantastic if they have more of a say.”

The White Paper also plans to overhaul teacher training, by increasing the time that trainees spend in the classroom, and by setting up a network of ‘teaching schools’ modelled on the ‘teaching hospitals’ system. Cynthia Martin, lecturer in the School of Education at the University of Reading and Past President of ALL said, “ALL will follow closely the developments around these new proposals about teacher training – the languages workforce has shrunk in recent years as numbers learning languages have declined and we now need the best possible training and professional development for teachers to ensure that we have a workforce ready to take on the challenge of what could be a new era for language learning.”

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Press contact:

Wendy Newman

Professional Officer

Association for Language Learning

e: wendyn@all-languages.org.uk

t: +44 116 229 7604

w: www.all-languages.org.uk

Notes to Editors:

1. **The Association for Language Learning (ALL):** ALL is the major UK national association of teachers of foreign languages, with over 5,000 members in all sectors of education:

www.all-languages.org.uk / <http://tinyurl.com/ALLonFacebook>.

For more information on ALL's responses to the proposals and our members' reactions, see:

[http://www.all-languages.org.uk/news/news_list/education white paper released](http://www.all-languages.org.uk/news/news_list/education_white_paper_released).

2. **Department for Education:**

Press Release:

www.education.gov.uk/inthenews/pressnotices/a0068673/schools-white-paper-published.

Schools White Paper:

www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/schoolswhitepaper/b0068570/the-importance-of-teaching/