

Nick Gibb MP
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
LONDON SW1P 3BT

Monday 8 November 2010

Dear Minister,

I write as Director of the Association for Language Learning, the national professional body for teachers of foreign languages, with over 5,000 members in all sectors of education. ALL is a registered charity and members give their time and energy to their professional community voluntarily. It is an independent association of experts and practitioners committed to raising standards in languages education and supporting the work of government, educational institutions and language teachers. It seeks to ensure that our citizens, institutions and commercial enterprises have the linguistic and intercultural proficiency to play a full part in the UK's global future.

We are most concerned about the future of the UK scheme which sends foreign language assistants into schools across the world to support children learning English. This scheme, which has been administered on behalf of the UK government by the British Council, has over many years also provided many thousands of students learning languages in higher education the opportunity to work in the country whose language and culture they study. Many of those who are language teachers today cut their teeth on this scheme which not only provides a linguistic and cultural immersion but gives many languages undergraduates a taste of teaching and acts as a springboard to a teaching career. The scheme is vital, too, to ensure that young people learning languages in higher education reach high levels of proficiency in the foreign language and are able to take up careers as interpreters and translators in Europe and beyond or work with the required fluency in organisations and businesses where excellence in a foreign language is crucial.

Our understanding is that recruitment to the scheme for students in England and Wales is currently on hold pending decisions on allocation of funds within DfE following the Comprehensive Spending Review. We urge the Government to continue to support this scheme for outgoing students which, for a relatively low cost, provides such a rich opportunity for young people studying languages at university, ensuring that graduates have an excellent command of their chosen language and good intercultural understanding whatever career they choose to follow.

Yours sincerely,

Linda Parker

Director of the Association for Language Learning