



ALL Briefing No. 7

Date: March 2019

Theme: Live Language learning issues in the media

Background:

A considerable number of advisory documents, reports, campaigns and recommendations have emerged in the public domain in the last few weeks, many of them with input from ALL members. This Briefing (necessarily longer than usual) provides a few selected messages from each of the following, highlights some interconnections and gives links to the full documents and discussion points.

RIPL: Primary Languages Policy in England - The Way Forward (March 2019)
BBC Language Learning Review (end February 2019)
British Academy Call to Action (end February 2019)
APPG National Recovery Programme for Languages (March 2019)
OFSTED Framework Consultation (until 5 April)

Selected messages from the above:

RIPL: Primary Languages Policy in England - The Way Forward (March 2019)
<http://www.ripl.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/RIPL-White-Paper-Primary-Languages-Policy-in-England.pdf>

RIPL is Research in Primary Languages network.

Extracts from this White Paper:

Evidence from inspection findings, research, and teacher testimony indicate that policy decisions alone are insufficient to ensure that successful teaching and learning programmes for primary languages are in place. There is a clear need for an implementation strategy, informed by current research findings. This White Paper seeks to inform such a strategy and sets out a number of recommendations towards the full implementation of current government policy for primary languages in England.

The White Paper identifies priorities to be addressed if the ambitions of the national curriculum reform are to be met (our **bold** text) .

- i. Planning for **substantial progress** in one language in a national context where level descriptors have been removed and where greater autonomy has been given to individual schools and academies;*
- ii. Defining appropriate expectations and outcomes relating to available **curriculum time** in each key stage;*
- iii. Developing **pedagogic approaches** that take account of teachers' subject knowledge and the characteristics of pupil intake at local level;*
- iv. Developing local agreements on the **choice** of (a) language or languages to be taught, (b) **curriculum** models, and (c) subject **content**, in order to support smooth transition at the point of transfer from key stage 2 to key stage 3;*
- v. Strengthening monitoring and **assessment** arrangements to ensure that reliable information on pupil achievement and outcomes in primary languages are communicated to receiving secondary schools.*

Recommendation headlines. (These are substantiated in the full text).

1. **Time allocation:** clear, non-statutory guidance about optimum time allocation for languages in Key Stage 2
2. **Pedagogy:** to strengthen the quality of teaching with investment by the DfE for teachers and ITE
3. **Curriculum planning:** non-statutory guidance on the minimum core content, to define what children should know by the end of KS2
4. **Transition:** to encourage collaboration between phases
5. **Assessment and reporting:** a nationally-recognised benchmark to be reached by children by the end of KS2
6. **Digital technology:** to improve teacher knowledge and to provide high-quality teaching resources
7. **School accountability:** Ofsted should focus on languages in the next inspection cycle to gather evidence related to the 3 Is of intent, implementation and impact
8. **School leadership:** school leaders and governors should be supported to strengthen and ensure suitable content for KS2
9. **Strategic role of research:** primary languages should be a DfE focus in the next round of social research aims
10. **Create a National Task Force for Primary Languages**

This final recommendation suggests links to the work of the National Centre for Excellence for Language Pedagogy and its hubs that focuses on key stages 3 and 4.
<https://ncelp.org/>

Language Learning Review from BBC (end February 2019)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-47334374>

Under the headline **Language learning: German and French drop by half in UK schools** this report raised issues in the media pursued in interviews and other reports (viz. The British Academy Call to Action below).

Extracts:

A separate survey of secondaries suggests a third have dropped at least one language from their GCSE options.

Of the schools which replied, most said the perception of languages as a difficult subject was the main reason behind a drop in the number of pupils studying for exams ... languages are now seen as a high-risk choice by schools and pupils, as many believe it is harder to get a high grade in exams.

Language Trends 2019 is not yet published.

British Academy Call to Action (end February 2019)

<https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/news/national-academies-urge-government-develop-national-languages-strategy>

This document aimed a Government lists 11 broad social, economic, cultural and educational benefits of creating a new National Language Strategy. It is published by The British Academy; with the Academy of Medical Sciences; the Royal Academy of Engineering; and the Royal Society.

Extracts:

The national academies call on the Government to adopt and implement a national strategy for languages and engage with a coalition of organisations who stand ready and willing to help implement it.

The task of making the UK's language capacity fit for purpose cannot be solved simply by changes to education policy. A joined-up approach is needed, across social, economic, and international policy, with coordination across different government departments and liaison with the devolved administrations of Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales

Framework proposal from the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Modern Languages : A NATIONAL RECOVERY PROGRAMME FOR LANGUAGES (March 2019)

<https://ukandeu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/A-national-recovery-programme-for-languages.pdf>

This proposal revisits some of the aspirations of the British Academy Call but adds a political dimension.

Extracts:

***We need a fresh mindset about learning languages.** They are perceived as difficult subjects; bilingual pupils are considered a problem rather than an asset; businesses say they are unhappy with school leavers' and graduates' language skills and yet do not prioritise language training. And the Government regularly fails to consider languages in major strategies despite their relevance (such as the 2018 Export Strategy).*

***The UK cannot keep relying on international recruitment for language skills.** More needs to be done – and, crucially, policies and action need to be properly co-ordinated across Government.*

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Modern Languages calls on Government, civil society and all stakeholders to act now to reverse this national crisis.

There follows a Vision with Strategic Objectives for Schools, Further/ Higher Education, Business, Government and Society followed by specific Goals.

Sample Objectives - for Schools:

Develop and implement an inclusive language policy from 5 – 18 with clear pathways to qualifications in a wide range of languages.

In England, students should have a reasonable expectation that their GCSE grade in MFL will be similar to that in other subjects without any systematic variation.

Selected sample Goals for Schools:

Adequate supply of properly trained languages teachers in the primary and secondary workforce with access to high quality initial teacher training and continuing professional development.

Every child to have the opportunity for international experience at home or overseas.

Every language learner to have access to a language assistant.

Effective communication of MFL outcomes at the point of transfer from primary to secondary schools to ensure coherent and coordinated transition.

An increase in the range of languages taught in primary and secondary schools.

Stronger messages from government to schools, parents and students about the value of languages.

OFSTED Framework

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofsted-launches-a-consultation-on-proposals-for-changes-to-the-education-inspection-framework>

The advisory / campaigning documents above are relevant also in the context of the proposed Ofsted Framework 2019 (currently in consultation) which aims to put the curriculum at the heart of the inspection process. This edited text is taken from the RIPL White Paper.

Amanda Spielman, HM Chief Inspector of Education, stated that the focus will be on the substance of education and a broad curriculum. Leadership will be judged on whether the curriculum has purpose and a clear design.

The introduction of a new judgment in the Ofsted Framework under Quality of Education should ensure that schools do not narrow down their curriculum, by looking at three distinct aspects:

intent – *what it is that schools want for all their children;*

implementation – *how teaching and assessment fulfil the intent*

impact – *the results and wider outcomes that children achieve.*

The implication is that Ofsted will challenge schools where too much time is spent on the preparation for tests at the expense of teaching.

Key messages for ALL members:

Some of the issues that have been a focus of concern for Language teachers and others over recent years are in the public eye at the moment.

ALL members and partner organisations are involved in many, if not all, of these developments and value your input into informing decision-makers locally as well as nationally.

The documents are all in the public domain and can support local negotiations, information to senior colleagues, planning etc.

These selections are personal and there may be others more pertinent to your context, so please explore the full document.

Points for reflection / action:

Primary colleagues:

Looking at the RIPL recommendations, which do you see as being the priority in your own context?

How can you use the support of this White Paper to influence positively the place of Languages in your own situation?

Teachers and trainers in all sectors:

Looking at the selection of Goals for Schools in the APPG Framework, which seem to you to be i) the priority and ii) most realistic?

How could you use the full recommendations to support the work you do on raising the profile of Languages?

What are the positive implications of the Objective for Schools:

Develop and implement an inclusive language policy from 5 – 18 with clear pathways to qualifications in a wide range of languages?

Could the proposed Inspection focus on **intent** and **implementation** help schools plan to overcome the perception of *languages as a difficult subject*?

Secondary colleagues:

The issue of continuity from Primary to Secondary comes across of several of these documents.

How can you use the proposals of the new OFSTED Framework to influence your school to allow more dialogue with colleagues in the Primary sector?

What will be the focus of your School's planning, practice and documentation review in light of the suggested Inspection focus on Curriculum?

Teacher Trainers:

The British Academy and APPG documents raise specific issues about training and CPD. How could you use these recommendations to support your own work and its status?

References :

RIPL: <http://www.ripl.uk/>

Comments are invited in the blog: <http://www.ripl.uk/blog/>

BBC Review

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-47334374>

National Centre for Excellence for Language Pedagogy.

<https://ncelp.org/>

British Academy Call to Action

<https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/news/national-academies-urge-government-develop-national-languages-strategy>

APPG Framework Proposal

<https://ukandeu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/A-national-recovery-programme-for-languages.pdf>

OFSTED Framework

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ofsted-launches-a-consultation-on-proposals-for-changes-to-the-education-inspection-framework>

This Briefing has been prepared by volunteers from the ALL Council and is for the benefit of ALL members.

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