

Scottish Government Inquiry into the teaching of foreign languages in primary school

Response by Lisa Bayliss (PT Modern Languages, Keith Grammar School)

- **Is there enough funding for the Scottish Government's proposal (including use of EU money)?**
 - Adequate funding is crucial for training and resources, not only to implement this proposal but also long term funding to ensure sustainability – there cannot just be funding for the first few years and then nothing!
 - It may be necessary/ desirable to work with other local authorities to pool resources/ training expertise etc. especially for a small authority like Moray. (See Education Scotland resources on Highland Council approach to MLPS training
<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/sharingpractice/h/highlandmplstraining/introduction.asp?strReferringChannel=sharingpractice&strReferringPageID=tcm:4-624652-64>)
- **Do existing teachers have the skills and teaching resources available for language tuition? Are existing teachers and teaching assistants equipped to teach languages? Should there be more training and support for new and existing teachers for language teaching?**
 - Current position: From my personal experience, there is a lot of good MLPS teaching in my ASG primaries but most of this is being carried out by teachers who are nearing retirement and who were originally trained under initial MLPS training in the mid-late 1990s and early 2000s (twilight CPD sessions etc?). In at least one of the ASG primaries, there is no-one qualified to teach MLPS and we (at KGS) are trying to help out and are looking at a member of staff from the Secondary visiting the Primary to deliver MLPS. The problem is sustainability when, of course, teachers move on to other schools, get promoted, retire etc and there is often no one left to teach MLPS and it is also often one of the first things to slip! I can only see this situation getting worse in my ASG over the next few years as a number of MLPS trained teachers are nearing retirement and new teachers have not been trained either through Moray CPD or during their ITE.

In my experience, primaries can also be quite inflexible when it comes to determining which language will be taught as it very much depends on the language expertise of the staff they have available. The primaries are determining what is taught and the subsequent numbers

in secondary rather than looking at the expertise in the Secondary and trying to make that fit what is happening at Primary. This can either mean that the language learned in Primary changes from year to year or that it is impossible to negotiate change of language with the primary as they only have certain number of trained staff in one language and cannot offer another or two languages (in bigger primaries)

- The future: I see there being a few possibilities here – either ML staff from Secondary schools deliver MLPS in their ASG, a peripatetic ML trained teacher delivers MLPS in a number of ASGs or all Primary teachers should be trained in MLPS either during initial teacher training (with a Higher in a ML being a requirement on entry (or exit) of initial teacher education) or CPD for established Primary school teachers.

My preferred option would be to allow Secondary staff to teach MLPS. This would ensure smooth transition and development of skills and may be the most cost effective option.

➤ **What is the capacity within the curriculum to accommodate greater language study? Can language learning be embedded in existing teaching?**

- Unsure as to what happens in Primary and how greater language study can be incorporated into an already crammed timetable in Primary. I believe that little and often is important especially in the early days of language learning, but then in Secondary we only see S1-S3 classes 3x 50/55mins a week. If Primary teachers are adequately trained and are confident enough, then elements of the language can be used on a daily basis in the classroom, and this could be done in addition to ring fenced time for MLPS during the teaching week (being delivered by a specialist)

➤ **The choice of languages for teaching – which languages should children be learning and why?**

- German, French and Spanish are the most commonly taught languages still. A number of secondary ML departments are going to one language only in S1-S2, which in the long term I believe will have a negative effect on languages departments. Personally I really struggle to get my head around this policy – I can only see that it is being done to save money and make timetabling easier! I am convinced that diversity of languages is key and I am delighted that my department offers 3 languages (German and French in S1-S6 and Spanish (from S3)). I am all for encouraging the introduction of Mandarin but it is difficult to sustain. It has been difficult enough at times to find enough Spanish teachers and Spanish has been popular for a while.

➤ **The role of languages in economic development – what languages should children be learning to benefit their future careers, and to help Scotland flourish economically**

- German is increasingly seen as the most important language for Economic development (see CBI report page 57) - http://www.cbi.org.uk/media/1514978/cbi_education_and_skills_survey_2012.pdf
- The Goethe Institute has produced an excellent video entitled German – The Smart Choice <http://www.goethe.de/ins/gb/lon/lhr/wer/en9885204.htm>
- That said, we should be teaching pupils to learn the SKILLS to learn any language, so it shouldn't matter which language they learn first. In my department, pupils who have studied one language up to Higher in S5, have generally done very well in S6 when picking up a INT 2 or Higher qualification in a second language.