

# STATES OF JERSEY



## MODERN LANGUAGES IN SCHOOLS

---

Lodged au Greffe on 21st October 2024  
by Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade  
Earliest date for debate: 12th November 2024

---

STATES GREFFE

## **PROPOSITION**

**THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –**

to request the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning to undertake any necessary actions to ensure –

- (a) that all students, both primary and secondary, should receive support from their school to access and develop their home language, in accordance with the rights afforded by Article 30 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- (b) that all States secondary schools should continue to offer a choice of at least two modern languages, other than English, one of which must be French;
- (c) that a review is undertaken into the delivery of Portuguese language tuition in schools, with a view to extending the provision of optional Portuguese in the curriculum to all students, and to report back to the Assembly on this provision before the end of July 2025; and
- (d) that the requirement for students to study at least one modern language, other than English, should be extended from key stage 3 (ages 11-13) to key stage 4 (ages 14-16) from September 2026.

DEPUTY M. TADIER OF ST. BRELADE

## REPORT

### Preface

I am lodging this proposition in my capacity as President of the Jersey branch of the Assemblée Parlementaire de la Francophonie, *and* because I strongly believe in the value of language learning and multilingualism – areas I have sought to championed in the past and will continue to support. As such, I am grateful for the other members of the APF (Jersey) Committee who have counter-signed this proposition.

The basis for this proposition has come from the many discussions that have taken place with other politicians of the APF committee all of whom agree that multilingualism is a good thing per se; that there is an increase in monolingualism in Jersey and that Jersey students are no longer required to study *any* (non-English) language after year 9 (13-14 years old), both of which are not good things.

My initial desire with this proposition was simply to reinstate the requirement for a choice of language to be studied at key stage 4. And this is covered in para (d) of the proposition. But on researching the background to this proposition, it has become apparent that there are other important areas related to language learning in our schools that also need attention; these include safeguarding of access to home, heritage and community languages.<sup>1</sup>

### Main Report

*'Every language an asset; every person respected; every culture acknowledged.'*<sup>2</sup>

There are three main premises of this proposition –

- 1) That learning one's native (home) language is the first building block to learning more generally;
- 2) That learning a second language has so many advantages *and* provides another platform for further learning;
- 3) That ceasing the study of a language at the age of 14 is *far too young* and out of kilter with the rest of Europe.

### The case for learning languages

The *arguments for* and benefits of learning additional languages are well understood and have been outlined in previous and current States reports/propositions (including in

---

<sup>1</sup> **Home languages** are what are sometimes also called 'native tongue'. This will be the or a language that is spoken at home by one or more parent/guardian that the child can also speak or understand. Heritage languages, in the Jersey context, would be Jèrriais and French, both of which have been and still are legal and/or indigenous languages in Jersey, as well as – in certain contexts - official languages, French still being the original language of our Parliament (States Assembly) and Court. Community languages, in Jersey, other than English, will be Portuguese, Polish and Romanian, as the main established languages, but there will be others too. N.B. These definitions are relative, so for a Portuguese person, English may be a home language, where one of the parents is an English speaker, and Portuguese may also be a heritage and home language for them.

<sup>2</sup> Languages Advisory Group: Vision and Goals. <https://www.all-languages.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Vision-statement-for-HHCL.pdf>

[p.166/2013](#) and more recently in [p.45/2024](#))<sup>3</sup>. But to summarise, some of the benefits include:

- cognitive advantages (enabling the individual to have access to new ways of thinking and learning)
- economic advantages; greater professional opportunities for the individual and increased business opportunities for the wider community.

Also, given Jersey's geographical, cultural and political context, having an increasingly bilingual or multilingual population/workforce would be highly advantageous for our island, especially in a post Brexit world, where we cannot always presume to rely on the UK to represent our best interests.

### **Learning from our European Neighbours**

As will be discussed in the course of this accompanying report, most of continental Europe has a completely different approach to additional language teaching and learning in their education systems. In the EU, it is not a case of *if* languages will be taught, but how many.

In Luxembourg, 80% of pupils at primary school learn two additional languages or more. In Latvia, Greece and Estonia, it is about a third. So, that is three languages or more, including their own tongue.<sup>4</sup> When it comes to middle school, the majority of students in 2022 in EU countries were studying *two* foreign languages – 61% compared to 58% in 2013.

In the UK (and Jersey), the trend is the other way. And one recent [article](#) explains why:

*'Languages stopped being compulsory at key stage four (years 10 and 11) in 2004. Since then, the number of students taking **a language** at GCSE has fallen significantly: from consistently over 550,000 [before 2004](#) to just over 370,000 in 2024.*

*The lack of school-based language learning has a knock-on effect. Fewer language learners in schools result in fewer language students at university, which ultimately leads to a shortage of qualified teachers to teach the next generation.'*<sup>5</sup>

Jersey ultimately has a choice whether to continue to follow the UK on its continued decimation of language teaching, or to follow a more European model. And as will be explained shortly, we believe that *now* is the ideal opportunity to recalibrate our relationship with languages (and perhaps, with Europe).

### **Home Languages**

*'Never make fun of someone who speaks broken English. It means they know another language.'*

– **H. Jackson Brown, Jr. (Author)**

---

<sup>3</sup> 'Bilingual Schools, Deputy P. Bailhache.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/10/03/where-in-the-eu-are-the-most-people-learning-multiple-languages>

<sup>5</sup> [GCSE results: more young people are studying languages – but the overall picture for language learning remains bleak \(theconversation.com\)](#)

Support for home languages is identified as a core aim of the Government's [Language Policy](#) which says that:

*'Students must be encouraged and supported to value their home language(s) and continue to develop proficiency in them, inside and outside the classroom.'*<sup>6</sup>

It continues:

*'A child's first language provides the roots to learn additional languages, and parents should be encouraged to continue to use their home languages to strengthen and support their children's language proficiency as they join new environments.'*

The language policy is correct to recognise the importance of home language for the simple reason that if a child who moves to Jersey at a young age and is put into a school setting when they have not yet sufficiently mastered their own language, they will struggle with their wider education, including with their grasp of English.

As one expert puts it, *'research findings consistently show that learners benefit from using their home language in education in early grade years.'*

*Learning does not begin in school. Learning starts at home in the learners' home language. Although the start of school is a continuation of this learning, it also presents significant changes in the mode of education.*

*On starting school, children find themselves in a new physical environment. The classroom is new, most of the classmates are strangers, the centre of authority (the teacher) is a stranger too. The structured way of learning is also new. If, in addition to these things, there is an abrupt change in the language of interaction, then the situation can get quite complicated. Indeed, it can negatively affect a child's progress. However, by using the learners' home language, schools can help children navigate the new environment and bridge their learning at school with the experience they bring from home.*

*By using the learners' home language, learners are more likely to engage in the learning process. The interactive learner-centred approach – recommended by all educationalists – thrives in an environment where learners are sufficiently proficient in the language of instruction. It allows learners to make suggestions, ask questions, answer questions and create and communicate new knowledge with enthusiasm. It gives learners confidence and helps to affirm their cultural identity. This in turn has a positive impact on the way learners see the relevance of school to their lives.'*<sup>7</sup>

The current Minister has confirmed that, *'A high importance is placed on access to home languages learning for pupils in Jersey schools,'* and that, *'The Language Policy for Education 2022 ... will continue to reflect the high priority and importance that is placed on learners' access to provision in their home language while at school in Jersey.'*<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Page 4, Jersey Language Policy

<sup>7</sup> Prof. Angela Kioko, [Why schools should teach young learners in home language | British Council](#) (2015)

<sup>8</sup> Answers to Oral Question [OO 163/2024, Sep. 10 2024 – States Hansard](#).

This commitment is welcomed and builds on the previous work started by his predecessor and in the existing language policy, which recognises that, **“The home language that each child brings to school with them is a critical element of their cognitive, emotional, social, and identity development.”**<sup>9</sup>

On top of the critical importance of home languages for learning, there is also a legal and moral obligation for our government to young people, given that since 2014, we have been willing parties to the United Nations Conventions of the Rights of the Child.

The two most relevant articles here are 29 and 30 which state that:

*‘the education of the child shall be directed to... the development of ...his or her own cultural identity, language and values.’*

And that:

*‘Children have the right to use their own language, culture and religion - even if these are not shared by most people in the country where they live.’*

The reason for including Para (a) in this *proposition*, therefore, is to reinforce the importance of access to home language learning, as well as to further the good work that is already going on to support multilingualism in schools, but which will likely require additional resources in the future to support the children who between them speak 62 languages<sup>10</sup> at the last count (2022).

This does not mean that teachers will be required to teach in all of these languages, but it will mean that schools may need to be creative and proactive in drawing upon the increasing variety of resources and technologies which are available to ensure that no EAL (English as an Additional Language) child is left behind.

## **A Choice of Language**

In education terms, languages should be seen as a *faculty*, like the sciences, the humanities, the arts. In key stage 3, students are given a wide choice in all of these faculties (music, art, photography; history, religious studies, geography, philosophy, psychology, biology, chemistry, physics (in some schools)).

Giving a choice of language is important and strikes the balance between the continuation of MFL (Modern Foreign Language) learning into key stage 4, whilst allowing the student to go with the language (or languages) that best suit them.

Part (b) also stipulates that *one* of the languages that should be offered is French. This does not mean that students *must* choose French. They can opt for the other language on offer by the school (e.g. Spanish, Portuguese, German, Italian, Mandarin). It is logical that French should be offered as this is the one language that is *compulsory* from key stage 2 in Jersey schools. It also recognises that French is both a heritage and legal language of Jersey and increasingly important as a language of business and government for Jersey. It makes sense, therefore, for all schools to offer French, even if a student ultimately chooses to choose a different MFL to follow to GCSE.

---

<sup>9</sup> [Language Policy, Jersey](https://www.gov.je/Education/Schools/ChildLearning/pages/languagepolicyjerseyeducation.aspx) (gov.je)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.je/Education/Schools/ChildLearning/pages/languagepolicyjerseyeducation.aspx>

## Valuing Portuguese

Portuguese is Jersey's second language in terms of global number of on-island speakers. The Portuguese diaspora has been a crucial and valued part of Jersey's wider community and economy since the late 1930s, when it is believed the first Portuguese migrants arrived in the Island from Madeira to work in hospitality and in agriculture.<sup>11</sup>

However, it is also undeniable to say that the Portuguese community in Jersey have also faced discrimination over the years. In 2023, the Government's opinion and lifestyles survey (for 2022) was published, in which 45% of Portuguese people in Jersey said that they felt they had been discriminated against because of their nationality or their race.

Speaking to the media about her experiences, in Jersey, one Portuguese woman said, '*I don't think there should be a difference, but people do treat us differently, that is a fact.*'<sup>12</sup>

One area where Portuguese is treated differently is in our education system – despite a high number of Portuguese heritage students, and I suspect, a high latent demand from other students, it is remarkable that Portuguese is not generally offered by schools as an option in the main curriculum.

On 10<sup>th</sup> September 2024, the Minister revealed that of the States schools, only Haute Vallée offered Portuguese as an option to all students. Other schools may offer a GCSE in Portuguese, but this tends to be limited to native speakers, and it is not offered in the curriculum, but as an option after school, by an outside organisation, The Camões Institute.

This follows on from an agreement that was signed in 2019 '*to broaden the teaching of the Portuguese language and culture in Jersey.*' However, the remit of this agreement is '*to promote Portuguese literacy to children of Portuguese heritage.*'

The government press release from 2019 tells us that *The Camões Institute recruits, pays, and manages two primary and two secondary school teachers to promote the use of Portuguese literacy to children of Portuguese heritage.*<sup>13</sup>

This has the effect of being discriminatory on two counts: firstly, the provision is only available to those pupils of Portuguese heritage, so excludes other students: as most schools do not have their own offering of Portuguese, non-heritage students do not have an option to study Portuguese. At the same time, Portuguese is generally taught after school, and so it means that the only way for most Portuguese heritage students to learn their home language is to do it after school. Taken together, it could be argued that this inadvertently promotes unequal treatment of young people. On the one hand, only Portuguese speakers can study Portuguese and when they do, they must do it after school. This is likely to limit what kind of other activities these students might be doing after school (when their non-Portuguese peers might be playing chess, doing sports, Duke of Edinburgh, joining the Sea Cadets, for example).

---

<sup>11</sup> [Project Luso | Jersey Community Relations Trust](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Discrimination an issue for Jersey's Portuguese community - BBC News](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Government Press release, 22 October 2019](#)

Fortunately, there is already some consensus, with the Minister confirming in question time recently that he ‘*would support the teaching of G.C.S.E. Portuguese as an option.*’ And this is what paragraph (c) is requesting.

#### **Extending a second language into key stage 4**

*‘Speaking only one language is a rarity in the modern world.’*

*–Prof. Mari Jones, French Linguistics and Language Change, Cambridge University.*

It used to be common in pre-occupation Jersey for people to speak multiple languages (French, Jèrriais and English). Until recently, it also used to be *normal* for students to learn *multiple languages* at school, and to continue to study them until GCSE or O Level.

We would do well at this point, therefore, to remind ourselves of Jersey’s starting point. Until well into the 20th century, Jersey was a predominantly French and Jèrriais (Norman) speaking island, with English as an important and emerging additional language. Most of the population was bilingual or trilingual, and other languages (such as Breton) were also in the mix.

In 2004, the UK Education system decided (in its wisdom) to scrap the requirement for their pupils to study an additional language after the age of 14 (beginning of key stage 4). The consequence was a steady decline in students leaving school at 16 with any qualification or competence in a second language.

With its highly anglicised curriculum, Jersey followed suit. The requirement was also removed from the curriculum in Jersey, and our 11-16 States schools gradually also changed their internal policy (Haut Vallée held out until 2016), and Victoria College, once a stalwart of Modern Languages, also followed suit.

The consequence can be seen in the table below, which shows the numbers and percentages of students who obtained results in Modern Languages for GCSE this year.

<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>School Name</b>	<b>Number of Year 11 pupils</b>	<b>Number of pupils with ML results</b>	<b>Number of ML results</b>	<b>% of pupils with ML results</b>
2023/2024	Grainville	131	53	74	40.5%
	Haute Vallée	115	41	54	35.7%
	Hautlieu	128	110	128	85.9%
	Jersey College for Girls	111	101	135	91.0%
	Le Rocquier	147	54	66	36.7%
	Les Quennevais	146	47	56	32.2%
	Victoria College	100	47	55	47.0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>878</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>568</b>	<b>51.6%</b>

14

<sup>14</sup> <https://statesassembly.gov.je/assemblyquestions/2024/wq.295-2024.pdf>



As you can see, as of this year, only Hautlieu and JCG require their students to continue a language to key stage 4, resulting in over 85% of their students leaving school with at least one GCSE in an additional modern language. This compares to 47% for Victoria College, and an average of only 36% in 11-16 States schools, and of course, many of those will be children multi-lingual who *already* have a home language other than English.

### **Inequality and Elitism**

The messages that this sends out are worrying and clear: boys don't need languages; languages are for those in those in the selective and/or fee paying schools; If you want your children to be sure to study a second language and come out with a GCSE in it, send them to JCG or Hautlieu.

So why is it that schools such as JCG and Hautlieu still insist on a language GCSE? One academic explains: *"There is a strong correlation between young people choosing a language from more advantaged backgrounds because those families tend to put a higher premium on a global mindset and professional mobility.*

*There's a very strong correlation between wellbeing, life aspiration, ambition, a global mindset and choosing a language."* - **Claire Gorrara, Professor of French Studies at Cardiff University (2021)**<sup>15</sup>

Whilst the average of just over half of students took a GCSE, when one looks at the schools in which a modern (foreign) language is not required, the average drops off to only 38.5%. In the 4 non-fee-paying schools, this drops to an average of 36%. Meanwhile, the average for the selective schools above is that 75% of students will leave with a GCSE in a MFL. Again, the message is clear. If you are at a selective or fee-paying school, you are very likely to gain a qualification in English and another language; if you are at a States School, there is a 2:1 chance you won't.

### **It does not have to be this way**

*"The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn."* - **Alvin Toffler**

What I am asking for in part (d) is the adoption of something similar to the EBACC, but for Jersey. The JBACC.

The [EBACC](#)<sup>16</sup> (English Baccalaureate) recognises the importance that languages play in a well-rounded secondary education.

And is best described *as a set of subjects at GCSE that keeps young people's options open for further study and future careers.*

The EBacc comprises:

---

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-59590802>

<sup>16</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a82c4a6ed915d74e3403788/EBacc-equia-July\\_17.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a82c4a6ed915d74e3403788/EBacc-equia-July_17.pdf)

- English language and literature
- maths
- the sciences
- geography or history
- **a language**

Jersey has excellent language teachers across its schools, as well as many ancillary resources in organisations such as the Alliance Française, La Maison de Normandie et de la Manche, The Camões Institute, the various and active cultural groups for those in the Portuguese, Polish, Romanian, Kenyan Communities, Friends of Africa and the various consuls *to name but a few* (and apologies for those whom I have left out).

Jersey's government has taken active steps to make sure that French, an official and heritage language the island, is taught in **all** schools, something which is supplemented by the *French Experience*.

The idea of valuing other languages, seeing Multi-Lingual Learners (MLL) as *gifted and talented*, rather than a burden or a challenge, is thankfully also taking root, thanks to the 2022 Language Policy.

Given all this investment that we put into languages, it is madness that we have taken away the requirement for an ML subject from 13-16yrs. On the European mainland, students study and take exams often in 2 or more ML to the equivalent of GCSE level. They are often required between 16-18 yrs.

The problem with allowing languages to be dropped early, is that they *will* be dropped by most (in the same way that maths, science and English Literature, would no doubt be dropped, were they not compulsory), especially when there are fewer and fewer cheerleaders, encouraging language uptake.

It has been suggested by the Education Minister and others, that it is not desirable to have young people study subjects that they *don't like* or may have no interest in. This may be a strong argument, if *all* subjects were optional. But they are not. Many students may find algebra baffling, physics boring, quadratic equations beastly – but they do not have a choice to drop them; or rather they do, but only *after* GCSE.

Does this mean that students would end up resenting being 'forced' to continue to study a language? I don't think so. As one academic points out, "*I have never met an adult who has retained a sense of resentment about being made to learn a language. In fact the opposite is true. Along with 'I wish I'd never been allowed to give up piano lessons', the expression of regret I hear most often is 'I wish I'd kept up my French (Spanish, Polish, Japanese...).'*"<sup>17</sup>

- Article by **John Worne, Director of Strategy at the [British Council](#)**, 2015.

Another argument put forward is that *something else* will have to be taken out of the curriculum. But the idea of having one of the compulsory options as a language is nothing new. For decades, in Jersey, students routinely had to make a choice of an ML (possibly two) for O Level or GCSE. The real questions are:

- 1) *why* were they taken out of the curriculum in the first place?
- 2) what replaced them?

---

<sup>17</sup> [Language learning in the UK: 'can't, won't, don't' \(telegraph.co.uk\)](#)

### 3) what happened to the teachers who taught them?

When this GCSE language requirement was removed, other options inevitably came into the timetable to take their place. The issue is that many of these other subjects do not necessarily need to be studied at key stage 4 to mean that they can be studied later on for academic or vocational training. One can study a whole host of subjects to advanced or degree level without having ever done them for GCSE. A good example is Law, where many institutes actually prefer students *not* to have done a GCSE or A Level in law. In the case of languages, however, ceasing one's learning at the age of 13 will seriously affect one's ability to become proficient later on in life and significantly limit one's options in related fields of study later on in life.

It has also been suggested that one of the reasons that students may not opt for MFL is that they are *too difficult*. One research [paper by the Education Policy Institute](#) in the UK says '*it is possible that the perceived curriculum difficulty has influenced the decline and that pupils often cite the perceived greater difficulty of language content when choosing not to take them at GCSE.*'<sup>18</sup>

However, since 2020, Ofqual have taken [action](#)<sup>19</sup> to address the widespread acknowledgement that languages GCSEs are marked too severely. Students will begin studying these reformed GCSEs in September 2024, which will refocus assessed content towards 1,700 word 'families' (or 1,200 at foundation tier), at least 85 per cent of which will be statistically selected from the 2,000 most frequently occurring words in a given language's conversation and writing.<sup>20</sup>

In this sense, this is a great time to make sure the vast majority of our students graduate from 11-16 education with at least one additional language under their belt.

### **Financial and staffing implications**

It is expected that where possible, the works streams arising from the adoption of this proposition will be done in house and/or from within existing budgets. This would be the case for providing home language support, for example, which is already an aspiration of the language policy; the review of Portuguese language provision is something that I would envisage could also be done in house.

The provision for and development of a Jèrriais syllabus and exam will likely need some additional provision, once teaching in due course, however, I would expect this work to be started in house from within existing resources.

The requirement for a second language to be taken at GCSE for those students taking options would be a matter left to secondary schools. It is not anticipated that the overall number of GCSE subjects that students take in Key stage 4 would increase, but there may be staffing implications for schools in the short term with a need to recruit more staff. Some of this will simply mean larger class sizes, in line with what currently

---

<sup>18</sup> [Language learning in England: why curriculum reform will not reverse the decline or narrow the gaps - Education Policy Institute \(epi.org.uk\)](#)

<sup>19</sup> [Revised GCSE qualifications in modern foreign languages - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>20</sup> [Language learning in England: why curriculum reform will not reverse the decline or narrow the gaps - Education Policy Institute \(epi.org.uk\)](#)

happens with core subjects; it will also be possible to utilise the skills of existing language teachers who are capable of teaching more than one language.

### **Children's Rights Impact Assessment**

A Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) has been prepared in relation to this proposition and is available to read on the States Assembly website.