

**BUDGET 2003: SECOND AMENDMENT**

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**Lodged au Greffe on 19th November 2002  
by Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier**

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**STATES OF JERSEY**

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*In the estimates of revenue expenditure of the Education Committee -*

Increase the estimate for Peripatetic, Psychological and Welfare Services by £51,500 from £568,200 to £619,700  
by reducing the estimate for ICT Support from £1,624,400 to £1,572,900

*and make consequential changes to the estimates shown on page 26.*

DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER

## REPORT

In responding to my questions on the basis for cuts made to the Education budget, the president of Education revealed that some £490,000 had been redirected to certain 'priority areas' including ICT replacement. Part of this re-allocation of funds involved the removal of central funding for peripatetic language assistants amounting to £51,500. This service is now to be funded out of already stretched school budgets.

I believe that this decision was wrong and endangers standards in language teaching in all our secondary schools.

### Overview

The present system has been in place for the past 27 years, and has always been organised and funded centrally. Over the years several language advisors have considered modifications but have always concluded that the centralised system is effective. As recently as July 2000, the then Assistant Director, Quality Development, Mavis Snowdon, confirmed to the full-time assistants that all head teachers were in favour of central allocation as in previous years. I believe that is still the case.

This sum of money funds three full-time assistants who divide their time between 2 or 3 schools, who each work 24 hours a week. There are also 2 parttime assistants. Between October and May each year there are also several French assistants from the University of Caen and a German assistant from the Central Bureau, who work 12 hours a week. The full-time and part-time assistants have vast experience behind them - in one case 27years, in another 22 years.

### What will change?

Under the new system, as is pointed out in the letter from the Department informing Heads of the change -

“As of September 2003 Foreign Language Assistants will no longer be funded centrally. Therefore, if you wish to continue using an assistant this will constitute a charge on your budget.”

The Heads are asked to tick boxes labelled -

I will require the following Language assistants for the year 2003/4 and am willing to fund this service from my budget.

I will not require Language assistants for the year 2003/4.

Heads are then asked to indicate which subjects they require and for how many hours. The letter also gives the rates -

Permanent Assistants (2 French,1 Spanish)	£20 per hour
Temporary Assistants	£16 per hour

These costs include travelling time. What about preparation time? Who will pay? At a time when school budgets have been effectively cut, and desperate Heads are looking to make savings just to survive, how tempting is this form? A few hours less? What about using the cheaper alternative? In the Departmental bidding war that breaks out each year between departments as they seek what they consider to be their “fair share” of diminished resources, what will become of the Language Assistants?

### Why is this so critical?

The role of the Language Assistant is central to the delivery of effective teaching and ultimately to the standards achieved. Exam grades depend upon them. As one teacher put it to me “You cannot teach modern languages without an assistant”.

Unlike many ancillaries, they are teaching staff. They work in tandem with the class teacher or alone with small groups. They give invaluable attention to individuals and groups to stimulate genuine communication in the target language.

They bring the foreign country and its culture into the classroom. They are a cheap and effective way of providing native speaker input to language learning. This is especially important in the current climate where there are fewer trips to take staff and students abroad.

The nature of the oral examination is such that the assistant plays an essential role in preparing students for the presentations, role plays, reporting tasks, and prescribed questions and texts. This oral contribution is essential to the delivery of high exam grades. The oral is today a substantial part of examinations at GCSE, AS and A2 levels -

GCSE	25%
AS Level	35%
A2 Level	35%

They save hours of teachers' and invigilators' time by conducting mock oral examinations at all levels, and because of their experience and training they also conduct actual examinations in most schools.

Jersey Head Teachers and Heads of Foreign Language Departments have an effective and efficient system for delivering a high-quality language experience in our schools through the centrally funded scheme. This move puts the whole system in jeopardy. If the Education Committee can properly justify its proposal to abandon central funding for Language Assistants let it do so. But let it do so over the coming year by consulting with all those concerned, and giving schools time to work out the alternatives and the consequences in good time for implementation in September 2004. The hasty decision to cut the 2003 is likely to have damaging consequences and should be reversed.

This amendment has no additional financial or manpower implications for the States.