

STATES OF JERSEY



DELIVERY OF THREE BILINGUAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS (P.45/2024): COMMENTS

Presented to the States on 4th September 2024
by the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

Introduction

The Minister cannot support this proposition for the reasons detailed below.

2016 Council of Ministers (CoM) Decision

The proposer advises that “*a report was eventually taken by the Department of Education to the then Council of Ministers in the summer of 2016 seeking a steer on a project to establish “a French bilingual provision”.*”

It is important to note that the report was not specifically and solely about the development of a French bilingual provision, it asked the Council of Ministers for their views on “*the development of a new model of teaching modern foreign languages in Jersey schools, including the creation of a new French bilingual school or stream.*”

The 2016 CoM report also highlighted four key areas of challenge:

- Cost
- Capacity to deliver
- Selection of pupils
- Head Teachers’ views

Eight years later these challenges remain and are explored in further detail throughout this comments paper.

Priority of needs

Analysis of education (external, specialist and evidence-based) in the past five years has identified the priority areas of a) special educational needs and disabilities and b) wider inclusion across all Island schools, if Jersey is to fulfil its ambition of providing a high performing education system to *all* islanders. This proposition does not align with these priorities, and, unless agreed with the full cost recognised and allocated from central government, potentially takes funding away from our children with the highest levels of need. Furthermore, establishing new bilingual schools will divert both Ministerial and officer attention away from the already established priorities within the Common Strategic Policy and CYPES Department priorities.

In addition, French is already a priority subject in the Jersey Curriculum, the only subject to have this support outside of English, mathematics and Jèrriais. The Minister is committed to ensuring that all Jersey pupils have access to high quality French learning. French is supported by the central provision of two specialist French teachers (1.5 FTE) who work across Jersey schools, providing centralised training and support for French teachers in schools across the island. This investment, initiated by the investigations into specialist teaching of French in 2015-2017, incurs a rolling cost which is currently £111,000 per annum. This is compared to the c.£500,000 allocated per annum to the support and promotion of Jèrriais. If there is a will from the Assembly to increase the support for French, as an equal language to Jèrriais, there could be further capacity created by looking across the two budgets together.

Key considerations re proposition to establish bilingual schools in Jersey

This proposition does not recognise that the Primary Curriculum across all subjects is a highly organised, detailed and sequenced series of learning from Nursery through to year 6 and then on to secondary education.

Learning from other jurisdictions, as referenced by the Deputy in his proposition, it is clear that to facilitate the proposed implementation there would in fact be a significant staffing need, both in terms of training and recruitment, and in the leadership and management in our schools. In addition, it is anticipated that there would be significant resource requirements, for example the provision of teaching and learning resources in both English and French. The experience of provision in other jurisdictions and settings, whether in the UK, Canada, mainland Europe or China, is that this proposition is far more complex than the simple employment of three French speaking teachers in the Reception class year ('Year R').

Seven-year approach required to establish three bi-lingual schools

- Prior to any changes and during the first year, school leaders would need significant training to support the planning of the curriculum provision. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is a specialist provision with statutory expectations for our youngest children (age 3-5, in schools). A complete review, re-write and re-sequencing across the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) would be required in the first year.
- Following the first year there would be a requirement to review, re-write and re-sequence all subjects within the Jersey Curriculum subjects for school Years 1 and 2, (which constitute Key Stage 1 of education, for ages 5-7) in French. This would then need to follow for Key Stage 2, for years 3-6 (ages 7 to 11).
- Once this planning is in place, work would be needed to adapt the school provision into bilingual practice. Currently we do not have the specialist expertise of bilingual methodologies on-Island. This input, through the recruitment of external specialist consultants, would be required to develop, implement and monitor new pedagogies, practice and policies.
- Over seven years, the entire staff of three Primary schools, the leaders and teachers and the teaching assistants, and ultimately administration staff too, would need to be trained and qualified to work as bilingual practitioners. appropriate to the age, phase and additional needs of the pupils they teach and work with. This practice is referenced in the Chinese examples in the Deputy's proposition.
- It is not clear in the proposition whether nursery provision is intended to be bilingual. The EYFS in a school context accommodates children between the ages of three to five in nursery and reception classes. The nursery year is key for children's development of their communication, language and early reading skills. Clearly curriculum planning for bilingual provision in Jersey would have to take this into account. If Nursery is included this increases the staffing and curriculum impact.

Ensuring appropriate teacher qualifications and experience

- Considering the lack of appropriately experienced colleagues on Island, French speaking teachers may need to be employed, most likely from off-Island, at least in the short term, producing either redundancies for current Jersey teachers or double staffing in schools - both of which would incur significant costs.
- Teachers recruited from France are unlikely to have training or experience in our statutory EYFS curriculum. Although children in France can attend day care (*maternelle*) or kindergarten (*pré-maternelle*) as early as age three, these provisions are not mandatory: children in France do not have to be enrolled in school until aged six. Consequently, there is a significant difference in the experience and expertise of primary teachers in our two jurisdictions.
- As a point of clarification, the *Brevet* qualification is a diploma of competence roughly equivalent to a GCSE pass in French. The *Brevet* is not a qualification that demonstrates the linguistic fluency that would be required to teach the full Jersey Curriculum subjects in French across Years R to 6. The vocabulary and grammar required to teach, for example, science or geography is far more complex than that taught if you are teaching pupils the early acquisition of French. Those with an A level in French may also struggle to have strong enough language fluency in French to teach a child subjects such as mathematics or science, given the specialist terminology and concepts required, particularly if children were finding it tricky and needed their learning explained in a variety of ways.
- It is therefore the case that bilingual French/English teachers will need to be fluent in both languages. As such there is either a need to re-train and re-qualify locally qualified English-speaking teachers to learn French to the required standard, or a need to recruit French speaking teachers, either in addition to existing staff, or replacing them, and to train them to deliver the Jersey curriculum.

Parental interest and support

Parental interest in bilingual schools has not been surveyed in Jersey since 2016, when 256 parents responded to a survey across a number of schools. In 2016, 153 respondents were in support of a French/English bilingual school. With changing demographics, and the impact of Brexit and the pandemic being seen strongly in work patterns and immigration on-Island, further research on parental interest is essential.

Consultation

At the point of writing, and due to the timing of the proposition being on the last day of the academic year, this comments paper does not include any formal teacher or headteacher view or feedback.

A head teacher survey on this proposition is being distributed today (3rd September) and the results will be shared with Members ahead of the debate.

In January 2024 there were eight schools who had a teacher with either the *Brevet* or an A level in French who could teach pupils in Years 3-6. However, as stated earlier, the

difference between teaching children an early grasp of French and teaching them the entire Jersey curriculum using a bi-lingual approach needs to be made clear.

Updated statistics on the qualification level of teachers will be provided in the survey results ahead of the debate.

The creation of 3 bilingual primary schools will require statutory public consultation in accordance with the Education (Jersey) Law 1999. This consultation will need to be open for at least two months, following which the Minister is required to present a Report to the Assembly within three months.

With the deadline for parents to apply for a primary school reception place of November 1st, it is clear that the proposition timeline for the creation of three bilingual primary schools by September 2025 is unachievable.

Costs

The proposed changes are not cost neutral; they create staffing and resource costs that are not factored into the current Government Plan. Estimates start at £468,000 in year one (R) and by end of year 7 (whole school R to Y6) rise to £2,173,000 recurring.

- A. The costs above are calculated on the assumption that the bilingual teachers will be new and additional recruits, based on three teachers each year plus the appropriate number of teaching assistants for the age and stage added as the programme moves up the school years.
- B. An alternative costing model could be the re-training of existing staff. Learning fluent French from the starting position of an A level or the Brevet is a significant undertaking for an adult learner and would require a period of time based in a French university, as well as local lessons. Previous proposals have looked at Caen University as a provider, but the specialist training for bilingual teaching of a full curriculum rather than training to deliver primary level French would be more demanding and lengthier than the Brevet or an A level. To achieve this, training teachers would need to be covered in their current school roles by qualified teachers. Assuming a teacher can train in a year, an optimistic assumption, the annual salary costs would be the same, plus the training costs.
- C. A final alternative is to progressively make three English speaking classroom teachers redundant each year, and to replace them with French trained colleagues. This also has a financial cost which can be calculated if requested.

Costs for option A above are outlined fully at the end of the comments paper.

Our Education Reform Programme has, since 2022, prioritised programmes which impact the majority of pupils, or pupils with an identified area of additional need. This proposition would impact a small minority of pupils, (in the region of 78 children, or 8-9% of each cohort (three classes per year group). Furthermore, the proposition could

potentially disadvantage a similar number by limiting their access to their local catchment school.

Catchment Issues and place allocation

Currently, pupils outside of the fee-paying Government of Jersey or non-provided ('private') schools are offered a primary school place that is close to where they live: i.e. their catchment school. The school admission team runs a central application process and allocates places fairly and equitably, dependent on the published criteria. There is an appeals process which processes applications every year, from parents of pupils who have either not gained a place in their catchment school because there are too many families in catchment, or who wish to be considered for a school that is not in their catchment. If we include a new criterion of parental choice to opt for or against bilingual schools, this will have the following impacts:

- 1) Up to 78 children/families for each school year would be told they cannot be offered a place in their catchment school (unless the family lived in the catchment of a bilingual school stream, applied to attend and were accepted).

For example, if a bilingual stream was to be delivered from Grouville, La Moye or d'Auvergne schools, then within each of these schools up to 26 children/families may not be able to attend their local catchment school. This would be further complicated by those who had previously started their nursery education in that school the year before statutory school age commences. Moreover, they may well have older siblings already attending the same school- as is normal for families- with significant disruption to family life by splitting children across different schools. Due to the requirement under the Deputy's Proposition, these families would be required to be allocated a place at an alternative school where there were places. This may not be the next closest school(s) and could significantly impact the progress that these children make across the curriculum during this crucial EYFS stage.

- 2) A new policy and criteria for Admissions applications (and Appeals) would need to be created:
 - a. If parental choice outweighed availability, then criteria for selection would need to be developed.
 - b. If parental choice did not fill available spaces, decisions would need to be made whether to run small class sizes, creating overload in other areas of the system, and incurring costs where a small class provides less value for money.
 - c. Where classes were full, but a family met the agreed appeals criteria and was successful in appeal, further actions would be required such as making class sizes larger or employing additional teachers at short notice to meet demand. These options would all incur additional costs.

School Population

There is a need to balance the recognised importance of French within our Jersey cultural and political systems, with the multi-national background of 50% of Jersey's residents¹ and their children attending school:

In our current (2024) primary schools first languages are declared as:

68.7% English
14.7% Portuguese
6.2% Polish
1.1% French

Significantly, there are now 11% of pupils listing a variety of first languages outside of English, Portuguese and Polish. The proportion of children who speak other languages, has nearly doubled from 6.7% in 2021.

According to the 2021 census, 0.7% of the population considered their ethnicity to be "White French". This has fallen slightly from 0.9% in 2011 (the actual numbers have reduced from 841 in 2011 to 692 in 2021). Other ethnicity groups who speak French may be present on island, but the numbers were too small to report.

Language Policies

The Language Policy for Jersey Education was launched in April 2022.

It states in its overview that the aim of the policy is 'to provide a consistent framework for educators to create optimal conditions for students to achieve and reach their full potential'. The policy applies to all Government of Jersey funded primary schools, secondary schools and colleges. The vision it states is to 'encourage, welcome and respond to a diverse range of language strengths, needs and identities, with the task of preparing students to leave school/college with the linguistic, academic, and social skills and competencies they require to become successful members of the community. A key element for success is empowering children to value their own language and cultures, and those of their peers. Raising the profile of all languages has a positive impact on inclusion and well-being for students.'

The proposal for a Bilingual French/English school runs against some aspects of the policy. The policy particularly focuses on the providing all children with equal opportunities to make progress in language development and learning in the languages of their heritage and the languages of the Island.'

¹ 50% of the Jersey population were born outside the island and represent a broad range of nationalities: French born Jersey population has dropped by 18% since 2011, to 692 in 2021, equalling 0.7% of the total population. Portuguese/Madeiran born population has risen by 17% to 9,739 or 9.4% of the total population. Romanian born population has tripled and is now 1.4 %, while Polish born population has dropped by 6%, and is now 3% of the total population. There are 29 French speaking countries in Africa, but none are listed in the 84 countries where Jersey residents have declared their births (elsewhere in the world or other European country).
Statistics Jersey – data from 2021 Census

As the 2021 census shows, the prime languages of heritage in Jersey schools are English, Portuguese and Polish while 11% of school children speak a wide range of languages reflecting their Asian, African, Caribbean or European countries of birth. In total, the 50% of Jersey residents who were not born here, declare 84 different countries of birth. The Multilingual Learner (MLL) strategy that schools have adopted, supports our pupils to progress in their heritage language while also developing their English.

Dr Eowyn Crisfield (co-author of our CYPES Languages Policy) in her paper 'Bilingual Education a Reflective Guide' when summarising research into bilingual education states,

'Earlier is not always better.... Full immersion from very young isn't always necessary or even very beneficial, depending on the language profile of the child.'

Crucially she states that

'Not all bilingual programmes are a good fit for every student.'

It is relevant to note that the research that is quoted in support of bilingual schools generally reference selective and/or fee-paying schools, and many are international schools.

The policy supports the quality teaching of French, as it does of Jèrriais, as languages significant to Jersey but it concludes,

"English has been the language of instruction in Jersey schools since 1912 and, in an increasingly globalised world, it is imperative that our students have highly developed English language skills by the time they leave education and enter the workplace."

CoM discussions of 2016: what happened next

Following the CoM request to investigate immersive approaches to French teaching, officers conducted a full survey of primary schools in 2017, consulting with leaders, teachers, parents and pupils. This identified a need to develop a revised curriculum vision across the Island, alongside a training approach to ensure equity of access to quality French teaching for all Jersey pupils.

Between 2016 and 2017 two main initiatives were launched. First, the compulsory teaching of French at Primary school was doubled, from two school years (Years 5 and 6, i.e. 9–11-year-olds) to four years (Years 3-6, inclusive, i.e. 7–11-year-olds). Second, an initial 75 pupils, across two schools, were offered a six-week immersive programme of French teaching, with one hour a day of formal French lessons and a broader programme of French-themed learning across the week, some of which was supported with additional French language support by the class teacher. On average, these pupils were found to have gained the equivalent attainment in French as that expected from one year of weekly French lessons and the class teachers reported a significant impact on their confidence and expertise in French.

['French Experience' pilot 2017 - YouTube](#)



Across the next school year, 2018/19, the pilot was extended and modified to enable the small specialist team to offer this French provision to more pupils and schools. The programme was formalised to three (rather than five) hours a week and the curriculum and resources to support the learning of both the pupils and the class teachers were adjusted.

Following a further impact report of the adjusted programme a successful bid was submitted in 2019 to make the 'French Experience' an established part of the curriculum offer in Government of Jersey primary schools. A team of 1.5 specialist teachers were employed to deliver the programme across Years 5 and 6 from September 2020. The French Experience programme has become an integral part of the Year 5 curriculum for over 80% of GoJ primary schools. Repeat uptake of the programme over the last 4 years is testimony in itself to the success and impact of the programme in schools, as well as Smart Survey evidence collected from primary teachers in 2020-2021 after each programme. On average 75% of pupils achieve a secure grasp of French by the end of Year 6 following the bespoke programme of study for French in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6, created and resourced by the French lead.

Since the roll out of the 2020 launch, pupils have progressed to current years 7-9 in their secondary schools. It is therefore too early to measure the impact of the programme on GCSE or A level uptake or attainment. However, what the end of year 6 scores suggest is that pupils are confident in their abilities as linguists, and that they enjoy learning the language; 75% are secure in the learning they have undertaken. How secondary schools take that forward will be apparent in time. As the Deputy acknowledges in this proposal, it takes time for education initiatives to bear fruit, but if the Eisteddfod entries are any indication there is evidence for optimism.

The French lead runs termly Continuous Professional Development (CPD), online support and targeted coaching support of teachers through the Primary French Network.

In a positive development, this next academic year the Education department have commissioned Alliance Française to provide French evening classes, 18 primary teachers are enrolled on bespoke 'beginner', 'improver' or 'intermediate' level programmes.

In 2021 the French lead supported the re-invigoration of the French Eisteddfod festival, when it was at risk of closing. With continued intervention and support from the team, pupil numbers taking part in the festival have reflected the increasing confidence in French learning across Jersey schools, from fewer than 150 entries pre- pandemic to more than 600 this year, with the festival extended to three days in 2024 to reflect the growing numbers.

If there is a wish to increase the support to the teaching of French across the Island, consideration could be given to the distribution of central languages funding; the central funding model currently prioritises Jèrriais by 5:1 (notwithstanding that Key Stage 2 class teachers deliver French in line with the Jersey Curriculum).

Equality of opportunity

The Minister is committed to ensuring that all Jersey pupils have access to high quality French learning. Investment to date, through the French Experience and cross island teacher development for the teaching of French, impacts the majority of pupils in the majority of Government of Jersey schools.

Economic Benefits

We have not yet been able to access research that reveals the proportion of the Island's economic activity that is currently conducted in French or other languages, nor how much trade is inhibited by a lack of French speaking people on Island.

Additionally, should this proposition be enacted, the first cohort of primary school children will not sit their GCSEs until 2036, and any A levels would be taken in 2038. Some of this cohort may be ready to enter the workforce after A levels, others would want to access university before returning to the workplace. This considerable delay makes predicting economic benefits unreliable, given how much the world of work has changed in the equivalent time looking back, and how it continued to evolve at pace.

Negative Impacts on current priorities

References to other policy areas within the Deputy's Proposition, such as parts of the Languages Policy, the Jersey Premium Policy and the Jèrriais Strategy, are not entirely accurate. For example, Jersey Premium funding is focused on ensuring that all pupils receive high quality teaching that addresses any differences in starting point or barriers to attainment created by socio-economic disadvantages. It is not used to 'meet the challenges of being taught in an unfamiliar language' as the Deputy suggests. The Deputy may in his comments be referencing aspects of the Multilingual approach adopted by schools since the launch of the Languages Policy, where pupils and their families who speak more than one language are encouraged to develop and maintain their fluency in their heritage or first home language, while also studying to learn

English to a level of fluency that will enable them to access and excel in the Jersey Curriculum subjects.

The references to Jèrriais learners in schools needs to be understood in the context of the whole Jersey curriculum offer.

The current model for delivering Jèrriais in schools is by a team of six centrally employed teachers. They predominantly introduce the language through the Alentou d'Jèrri (Around Jersey) programme which takes a cross-curricular approach that combines language learning with input on Jersey history, geography, culture, folklore. It introduces simple phases and vocabulary through games and activities. A small number of schools invite a teacher to deliver Jèrriais language lessons in the day to children and young people who request it, usually in small groups or 1:1, and one primary school offers lessons to all classes in years 2-6. If a pupil wishes to undertake more formal lessons in Jèrriais they can opt to join lessons outside of school time, in a *Pallion*, and there are currently seven of these, four in primary schools and three in secondary schools. This mixed approach is not comparable to the teaching of French within the Jersey curriculum, or to a bi-lingual provision.



Financial and staffing implications

Provisional estimates of costing implications are as follows:

Average salary (+18% on-costs) calculated Teacher @£75K; TA @ £38K

Initial preparations: £30 - 50,000; £30K planning/training recurring each year

In year 1 of roll out = £483,000 an additional £6,200 per pupil

By year 7 (2031) = £2,173,000 cost, an additional £4,000 per pupil.

Year	Teachers	Key worker	Training	Cost £ (in Ks)
Prep phase -			Curriculum planning; research visits; consultant advice; staff recruitment and initial training for year R	30
Rollout year	Year R x 3 @	TA x 6	As above; training for year 1	225 228 30
Rollout year +1	Year 1 x 3	TA x 3	As above; training for year 2	225 114 30
Rollout year +2	Year 2 x 3		As above; training for year 3	225 30
Rollout year +3	Year 3 x 3	TA x1 (SEND across 2-3 classes)	As above; training for year 4	225 38
Rollout year +4	Year 4 x 3		As above; training for year 5	225 30
Rollout year +5	Year 5 x 3	TA x1 (SEND across 2-3 classes)	As above; training for year 6 and preparation for cross phase transitions to secondary schools	225 38 30
Rollout year +6	Year 6 x 3		Working with teachers at KS3	225
Total teacher cost				£1,575,000
Total TA cost				£ 418,000
Training/ consultancy costs				£ 180,000*
				£2,173,000

**Training costs would reduce at the end of year 5 given a body of teachers and leaders with increased expertise gathered over time.*

Costs calculated based on three classes of 26; 78 children per island cohort.

Head Teachers' Views

The proposer was not willing to defer the debate by 3 weeks therefore it is not possible to gather views of Headteachers before the 2nd September deadline to submit a comments paper.

It is planned to send a survey to primary school head teachers on Wednesday 4th September and the results of the survey will be shared with Members before the debate.

Conclusion

High quality teaching of French is not best delivered to children and young people across the island by the creation of another branch of selective education.

The multilingual learner (MLL) approach adopted since the launch of the Languages Policy has indeed brought significant cultural and educational benefits to our school populations. However, this approach is distinct from the promotion of the teaching of any one individual modern language. Success has been due to how well all communities represented on the island are supported to both learn English fluently and to respect and develop fluency in their home or heritage language.

The proposition is not funded, nor does it recognise the sequencing, structure and breadth of our curriculum offer, or the workforce expertise and capacity required to deliver it.

With 0.7% of the Island population declaring as native French speakers, and research showing that bilingual schools require both languages to be spoken beyond the school environment, this model is not likely to succeed in meeting its objectives.

Finally, as Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, I remain committed to our declared priorities of inclusion, equal opportunities and the promotion of equity for all our learners. This proposition by its design is neither inclusive nor accessible to all children and young people on Island.

Possible alternative approaches

1. Increased investment in, and training for, the teaching of French as a modern language across all Jersey primary schools.
2. Consideration of the creation of a French stream within an existing fee-paying school.
3. Consideration of any future proposal for a new, independent bilingual school, under the Education (Jersey) Law 1999.