

STATES OF JERSEY



MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2016 – 2019 (P.72/2015): TENTH AMENDMENT

**Lodged au Greffe on 22nd September 2015
by Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade**

STATES GREFFE

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2016 – 2019 (P.72/2015):
TENTH AMENDMENT

PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (b)(i) –

After the words “Summary Table C” insert the words –

“except that the net revenue expenditure of the Education, Sport and Culture Department shall be increased by £40,000 in 2016, in order to provide funding for the reinstatement of 24 hours a week French language assistant teaching in primary schools and the net revenue expenditure of the Chief Minister’s Department shall be reduced in 2016 by the same amount by reducing the funding for the Communications Unit”.

DEPUTY M. TADIER OF ST. BRELADE

REPORT

'We want pupils going to secondary school with a good grasp of languages and we are currently developing a strategy to achieve our aims.' – **Director of Education**

It is a sad state of affairs, in an Island which has long had a tradition of French speaking, whether that be in the form of Norman-French, Old French or more recent versions, to have to bring yet another amendment to reinstate the budget and the practice of having Foreign Language Teaching Assistants in all Island primary schools.

I was shocked to learn, only on 14th July (*ironically*), that teaching assistant positions had been axed. This is the perfect example of a false economy, which will have tangible negative repercussions several years down the line.

Unfortunately, revelation of the cuts was too late to do anything for the forthcoming start of the 2015–16 academic year. This came despite the States having unanimously supported [P.166/2013 – Modern Language Teaching: review](#) – on 23rd January 2014, with many Members and Ministers standing up singing the praises of learning a second language, and doing so in the early years.

As such, I do not feel the need to make the argument for the importance of language learning or the vital rôle that is played by a native foreign language assistant – those arguments have already been made – *and won* (I do attach the reports from previous propositions as Appendices to this one).

It should be noted that in 2012, following the debate of P.69/2012 Amd.(3) to the Medium Term Financial Plan 2013 – 2015, the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture was directed by Ministers to *protect* the funding for French Language Assistants at Primary, but to do it from within his own budgets. Despite this, 20 Members still voted in favour of my amendment then, and FLTA were maintained, but only temporarily. It is my conclusion, from this, that the Assembly values French as an important part of our local culture; it wants it to be taught effectively in schools, and that they wanted native teaching assistantships to be maintained at all costs. I hope this is still the case in this Assembly. If we value it, we must also fund it. We must prioritise it.

I have made the case in P.166/2013 about how much more effectively young children pick up languages in early years (before the age of 7). We can be sure that £40,000 spent a year on language acquisition at Primary School is much more effective than the same sum spent post-14 at Secondary School. It is sheer folly to cut this, given our otherwise commitment to improving French language learning.

Although it is only possible at this stage to debate the £40,000 funding for 2016, I trust that the Council of Ministers will ensure that this provision is carried on into 2017 to 2019 when the second part of this MTFP is lodged next year. £160,000 over 4 years to protect the longstanding tradition of Native French Speaker language assistants in primary schools, where they have the most impact on language acquisition, should not be seen as a *nice to have* or something we *can no longer afford in the current economic climate*, rather, it should be seen as a necessary investment to keep our students competitive with others throughout Europe, when they finally do enter the work-place, but also to protect.

Financial and manpower implications

This amendment is designed to be financially neutral, with the additional costs of maintaining funding for Teaching Assistants for 2016 being met by the reduction in the budget for the Chief Minister's Department by the sum of £40,000. There are no manpower consequences arising.

STATES OF JERSEY



**MODERN LANGUAGE TEACHING:
REVIEW**

Lodged au Greffe on 17th December 2013
by Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade

STATES GREFFE

2013

Price code: C

P.166

PROPOSITION

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

- (a) to request the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture to conduct a review of modern language teaching in schools, to include the following matters –
 - (i) an account of current language provision and take-up;
 - (ii) an examination of additional languages that could be added to the curriculum, in order to meet current and future socio-economic and cultural demands;
 - (iii) which languages, if any, should be offered on an optional basis;
 - (iv) the optimum age at which foreign languages should start to be taught in schools;
 - (v) alternative methods of language tuition, including, but not limited to, immersion learning and bi-lingual tuition;
 - (vi) a feasibility study into the creation of one or more bi-lingual and/or immersion learning schools in the Island;
 - (vii) an exploration into the viability and desirability of extending School Twinning Programmes and student/teacher exchanges;
 - (viii) extending the use of language resources provided for schools to businesses/adult learners outside of school hours;
- (b) to request the Minister to report back to the States no later than September 2014 with findings and recommendations.

DEPUTY M. TADIER OF ST. BRELADE

REPORT

‘Speaking only one language is a rarity in the modern world.’ – Dr. Mari Jones, Reader in French Linguistics and Language Change at Cambridge.

I was pleased to be able to attend the 2013 Conference for Culture on 30th November which, amongst other things, looked at the importance of preserving our native language of Jèrriais. One of the highlights of that meeting was a very inspiring talk given by Dr. Mari Jones of Peterhouse Cambridge. The words she used (above) jumped out at me when she spoke. She also reiterated the benefits of bi- and multi-lingualism – culturally, cognitively and economically.

I am sure these benefits are widely appreciated by States Members and the public and we are fortunate, as an Island, to have a rich diversity of languages and cultures that have come to influence the Jersey that we know today.

It is also obvious from the number of questions that have been asked on the subject in recent years that Modern Language provision features significantly in the interests of various States Members, and Ministers.

This proposition seeks to establish consensus from members that –

- (1) foreign language learning is an important area of the curriculum for our young people;
- (2) we live in a changing world and consequently, the way we teach/learn languages (and *which* languages are on offer) should be the subject of periodical review.

Paragraphs (i), (ii) and (iii)

In order to see where we want to be going, it is important to take stock of where we are currently. The take-up for modern foreign languages appears to be in decline (see **Appendices**). It is worth noting that French is no longer *compulsory* in schools, and German is no longer offered at A-level, and has also declined at GCSE.

At the same time, we are living in a world where certain economies and their related cultures are becoming more significant, globally. This was demonstrated by the following question and answer on 8th October that I addressed to the Minister for Economic Development –

‘Will the Minister state which foreign languages are the most important for Jersey both currently and in the medium and longer term in terms of business?’

‘What plans are there for co-ordination with the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture to make sure that a sufficient number of local school-leavers are sufficiently competent in these languages to meet current and future demands for these language skills for business and culture?’

The full answer can be seen in **Appendix 1** but, crucially, the Minister identified the importance of Mandarin and Portuguese, reflecting the significance of the emerging **BRIC** countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) on current and future trade.

He acknowledged that: *‘Individuals who study languages at a higher level in Jersey have remained relatively and consistently low over the last 5 years’* and that *‘Enhanced language skills are likely to become a key employability asset in terms of the future Jersey workforce and the States is seeking to promote languages alongside other higher level professional skills.’*

On 11th September 2012, questions relating to the teaching of modern languages were also raised (initially to do with German), with the current Minister for Education, Sport and Culture stating: *‘I think any improvement in the ability of Islanders to speak modern foreign languages is desirable, whether it be German or whether it be French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese indeed, or even Mandarin et al.’*

Given the clear importance of Portuguese, Chinese, Russian and Spanish (and Arabic) as important world languages, it is right that, educationally, we also ascertain whether we need to realign our language provision accordingly.

Paragraphs (iv), (v) and (vi) – A Language Strategy

There is a perception, which is largely valid, that Britain is ‘linguistically handicapped’, with a prevalence of monoglots whose only language is English. If we, in Jersey, are to compete linguistically with other countries, and even the UK, it is important that we have a Jersey **language strategy** that puts the effective acquisition of key strategic languages at its heart.

If we are to be successful, **it is key that languages are taught at an early age.** Firstly, because this is where resources are targeted most effectively and secondly, because young children learn languages in a different way to adults (i.e. more efficiently).

Experts tell us that –

‘For a person to be able to pronounce certain sounds, it is necessary that they be exposed to them before a certain age; afterwards, they not only lose the ability to speak these sounds, but also to hear them.’¹

‘Research in second-language learning indicates that the optimum time to learn a new language without difficulty, without an accent, and with proper syntax is before 7 years of age.’²

Currently, however, acquisition of a modern language usually happens much later, if at all.

It is also important that we look at different methodologies for the teaching of (modern) foreign languages, which may well include making the use of immersion and/or bilingual schools or lesson plans. We know that interest has already indicated in this area, with a delegation sent to look at UK bilingual schools in October of this year. I believe it is important that that work is followed up.

¹ ‘Why we speak with foreign accents’ – <http://blog.brainscape.com/2012/03/why-foreign-accents>

² J.W. Wilson, ‘Cracking the Learning Code’ – <http://crackingthelearningcode.com/bonus7.html>

Paragraphs (vii) and (viii)

Many of us know from first-hand experience how extremely valuable school exchanges and twinning programmes are in the process of effective language acquisition, not to mention the important cultural exposure that they bring.

It is to be commended that steps have already been taking in establishing educational links with schools in China, which reflect the economic and cultural diplomacy that is taking place concurrently. I would hope that these type of exchange programmes could be extended – and who knows, one day even our parishes may be twinned with places in China.

It is also important that we continue the work that is already being done, to support businesses whose staff wish to train in foreign languages for work purposes. It may prove both desirable and beneficial to extend access to school provision to the wider public and/or vice versa.

Finally, whilst I hope that the general thrust of this proposition will seem uncontroversial and even desirable to most, I do believe that it is important that action is taken in a timely manner. Learning languages is not something that happens overnight. It will need sustained effort for the fruits to be realised in future years. I would encourage members ask for a swift review and a plan of action so that we can be assured that Jersey is fighting fit to meet the linguistic demands of the current and future needs of the Island; so that our school-leavers will be in the best possible position to compete effectively in terms of jobs, creativity and personally.

Financial and manpower implications

It is expected that this review will be conducted from existing budgets.

STATES OF JERSEY



**MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN
2013 – 2015 (P.69/2012):
THIRD AMENDMENT**

Lodged au Greffe on 23rd October 2012
by Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade

STATES GREFFE

2012

Price code: A

P.69 Amd.(3)

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2013 – 2015 (P.69/2012):
THIRD AMENDMENT

1 PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (b) –

After the words “as set out in Summary Table A” insert the words –

“except that the total amount of States net revenue expenditure shall be increased by £25,000 in each of the years 2013, 2014 and 2015 in order to provide funding for the reinstatement of 24 hours a week French language assistant teaching in primary schools”.

2 PAGE 2, PARAGRAPH (c)(i) –

After the words “Summary Table B” insert the words –

“except that the net revenue expenditure of the Education, Sport and Culture Department shall be increased by £25,000 in each of the years 2013, 2014 and 2015 in order to provide funding for the reinstatement of 24 hours a week French language assistant teaching in primary schools”.

DEPUTY M. TADIER OF ST. BRELADE

REPORT

“Language learning is an important way of helping to prepare our children for life in a global society, work in a global economy and fosters their intellectual development.

Foreign Language Assistants bring immense value to the schools in which they work – in terms of the insight they bring into both a foreign language and culture. [They] are in a unique position to support the development of talking and listening skills by providing exposure to authentic target language and by creating natural opportunities for real communication.”

– Sarah Breslin, Scotland’s National Centre for Languages¹

The benefits of learning a foreign language are, I think, generally well understood. The importance of *French* to our Island, both culturally and in terms of our economy, also needs little explanation.

With effect from 2010, the employment and corresponding ‘man hours’ of foreign language assistant tuition was cut, and went down from a total of **188 hours** per week in 2009/2010 to **115 hours** in 2010/2011 (see **Appendix 1**). This is a reduction of **73 hours** in the space of a year.

In order to cope with these cuts, the use of Language Assistants has been prioritised to exam groups, meaning that Jersey students do not currently experience the benefit of native language conversation and tuition until they are 14 years old (Year 9/10).

This amendment does not seek to reinstate the budget for Language Assistants to its full complement as it stood prior to 2010, rather it seeks to reinstate the 24 hours-a-week allocation to primary schools that has been completely removed since then. It should, thus, be considered as both a **modest** and **targeted** amendment.

Jersey is perhaps unusual in providing French tuition during primary years. This is something of which we should be rightfully proud, firstly as the language is of vital cultural and strategic importance to our Island and, secondly, because the early teaching of a language (the earlier the better) is crucial in the ultimate success of gaining proficiency therein.

However, unlike at secondary and examination level, primary teachers who instruct in French are *generally* not specialists in the subject. It is, therefore, particularly important from a languages point of view, that students have access to a *native* language speaker to complement the class-based work that is going on at the same time. It is particularly important in the development of accurate pronunciation and comprehension skills that they have this exposure, as these become more difficult to attain over time. Language expert, Isabell Collett explains –

‘For a person to be able to pronounce certain sounds, it is necessary that they be exposed to them before a certain age; afterwards, they not only lose the ability to speak these sounds, but also to hear them.’²

Also –

‘Research in second-language learning indicates that the optimum time to learn a new language without difficulty, without an accent, and with proper syntax is before 7 years of age.’³

Benefits for Industry and individual development

I believe this move ties in with the desire to make sure that our tourism and hospitality sectors have staff with the relevant capacities to work effectively in the industry (i.e. to make French tourists feel welcome); and that local school-leavers are able to pursue a job in this sector, with the prerequisite language ability that it implies.

Even if school-leavers do not go on to work in hospitality or tourism, the self-confidence that often goes with the ability to express oneself in, and understand, a foreign language, will be invaluable in that young person’s individual and professional development.

What this amendment seeks to do is to increase the current 116 hours p/w to 141 p/w, so that primary school-children who are learning French may also have the benefit of exposure to *native* foreign language teaching professionals. I believe this tuition, and the money spent on it, will be much more productive (as a result of early intervention) and will reap personal benefits for the students themselves and socio-economic benefits for our Island into the future.

Financial and manpower implications

The cost of passing this amendment will be £75,000 over 3 years, the annual cost of £25,000 being the total cost of providing 24 hours per week per annum for French language assistants to the primary schools.

The cost of £25,000 p.a. is almost exclusively staff costs; and I am informed that there is no need to add any increase to Education, Sport and Culture for inflation, as staff salary increases have not been added to departmental budgets for 2014 and 2015 as the wage negotiations are still ongoing. Money for staff salary increases in future years are held centrally in the contingency vote.

References:

- ¹ British Council article, ‘Why employ an assistant’ –
<http://www.britishcouncil.org/languageassistants-why-employ-an-assistant.htm>
- ² ‘Why we speak with foreign accents’ –
<http://blog.brainscape.com/2012/03/why-foreign-accents/>
- ³ J.W. Wilson, ‘Cracking the Learning Code’ –
<http://crackingthelarningcode.com/bonus7.html>