

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

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://crackingthelearningcode.com/bonus7.html>