

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CHIEF MINISTER
BY DEPUTY M. TADIER OF ST. BRELADE
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 9th OCTOBER 2018**

Question

What assessment has the Chief Minister made of the benefits to the Island of retaining French as an official language of the States? Given that French is an official language of the States, what obligations, if any, does government have to ensure access to French, and education in French, for citizens, particularly in view of French not being a compulsory subject in schools after Year 9?

Answer

A)

I have not considered this matter in any depth, although I am keen to retain the best traditions of the States. As a French speaker I am keen to promote the use of languages where possible however at present I believe that we have a good balance of languages spoken within the Assembly.

B)

Whilst there is no obligation to ensure access to French for citizens, both the Minister for Education and myself are keen to promote the teaching of languages in our schools, and the promotion of languages in general to the wider population.

Schools are obliged to teach French from Years 3 to 9. Although there is no obligation for schools to deliver French after year 9, all secondary schools offer French as a GCSE option and students from all secondary schools are able to access A Level French. Jersey schools are committed to pupils developing a love of learning languages and it is in this connection that French has been an identified area of significance and priority for Jersey Education for some time. It features specifically in both the revised and re-launched Jersey Curriculum 2014 and in the Education Business Plan 2015-18. To ensure that Jersey pupils have an entitlement to learn the language, French was made the target language for all primary school modern foreign languages teaching in 2014 and the provision for pupils was doubled so that all are entitled to learn French as part of their balanced Key Stage 2 provision between the ages of 7 and 11. In many schools the teaching of French starts younger than Year 3, according to the schools' own curriculum planning.

In addition the Education team have built on the well-established Heads of Secondary MFL network to effectively support the training and development of primary school teachers to deliver French to a high standard. This is being achieved through the identification and employment of a Lead Teacher of French. This has enabled a range of in school bespoke training opportunities to be delivered this year as well as an opportunity for all teachers to attend a termly French Network meeting where best practice is shared by a range of teachers and resources evaluated and developed.

Finally, the team has created and delivered an intensive French teaching programme for pupils in Year 5 of primary. The first phase of this programme ran last year, with 75 pupils with a range of starting points and experience of French, across three classes in two schools. This pilot was successful: the pupils demonstrated impressive progress in the development of their knowledge and understanding of French, gaining enormous confidence and enthusiasm, and the programme was very positively received by their parents and carers. The pilot has been extended this school year to 200 Year 5 pupils in 6 schools (8 classes in total) across the island who are all having daily French lessons for 6 weeks, and I would very much like to visit one of these schools to see the lessons for myself.

This primary school focus on French is expected to have a positive impact on pupil progress with the language in secondary schools moving forward, giving pupils a strong starting point from which to undertake a GCSE in the subject. In addition these early successes for primary pupils helps pupils to identify languages as a positive area of learning for them, offering them a platform from which to move to the study of other languages such as Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, German or Mandarin (and, separately, Jèrriais).

All schools offer French in Year 7 and most broaden the offer to include additional choices that year or in Year 8. Although French is not compulsory as a GCSE option in every school, it is still the most popular language option across the Island, with Spanish coming second. A higher proportion of pupils in Jersey take a GCSE in a modern foreign language than in England, and it is our expectation that the support of the language in primary school will have a long term effect in maintaining and developing these levels of engagement.