

2018.11.20

5 Deputy M. Tadier of the Minister for Education regarding the teaching of French in post-14 education: [OQ.201.2018]

I think the Assistant Minister will take the answer, if that is okay, just to clarify. Does the Minister have any plans to make French a compulsory subject post-14 in provided schools and, if not, why not?

Deputy J.M. Maçon (Assistant Minister for Education - rapporteur):

Plans are not currently in place to make French a compulsory subject post-14 in provided schools. French has a priority in the primary curriculum, unlike in England where any modern foreign language can be taught. As a result, pupils are increasingly well-placed to extend their grasp of the subject where it continues to the end of key stage 3. The reason as to why not is because we believe that the pupil is best to decide what they should study at G.C.S.E. (General Certificate of Secondary Education) level.

3.5.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

Presumably, the students' freedom of choice does not extend to maths and English or science or humanity, so I would ask: does the Assistant Minister believe that it is a trend, which we want to encourage, which is to say the trend of being monolingual increasingly in what used to be a bilingual or trilingual island.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

The Deputy raises a very good point. What I would say is of course when it comes to modern languages it is not specifically French. There are other options which students do have within our schools: Spanish, German, and of course it makes sense if you come from a Portuguese or Polish heritage it is in those students interests to take those languages instead of French. So again it really has to be suited to what is good for the students in allowing them to best excel in their G.C.S.E. exam.

3.5.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

I thank the Assistant Minister for his answer. I completely agree that we should be encouraging all languages and where students have their own mother tongue it is important that that is recognised academically. In fact, we need to do more to make sure that they can sit their exams in that subject. But I would ask the Assistant Minister to confirm that he will go back to the department and make the case for French specifically. We are still an Island, which is geographically and I hope culturally, very close to France. I have seen a trend... I think we have all seen the trend away from second languages generally, and away from French. I think the department should be doing as much as they can to make sure that French is followed through from a young age to exam level at G.C.S.E. So if the Minister can confirm that he would undertake to do that.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

I can make 2 undertakings to the Member. First, you are right, we do need to do more to celebrate the cultural and diverse heritages within the Island. The second point on specifically French: there are initiatives already undertaken, such as the French Experience, which is currently going on with year 5 students, which has been piloted. We are making bids to Treasury to try and extend that so it will be an ongoing programme for all students, so it has not just been piloted in other schools. We are not worlds away from what the Deputy is trying to achieve. Of course the invitation to him is

always there to come into the department and talk with us, should he want to pursue matters, but it is something which is on our radar and it is something the department is working on.