



THE CAMPAIGN  
FOR LANGUAGES

## Briefing for Objective 2

### A coherent experience of languages for all children in primary school

This will introduce the learning of other languages and cultures as well as develop a better understanding of how the child's own languages work.

#### ▪ Why early language learning matters

Languages are crucial to our development as a country. They are essential to our economic development; they give a unique insight into other cultures; they provide academic rigour and help cognitive development. Primary languages open children's minds to the world, developing intercultural understanding at a time when they are curious and able to empathise with others. Early learning enables children to absorb the patterns of language and to make links with their own first language. Primary languages are the foundation for all later language learning and there is much evidence that, the earlier we begin, the more effective the learning is. The benefits of early language learning – for society and for individuals – are widely recognised across Europe and beyond: most countries have already introduced languages at primary level and all offer more contact hours for language learning than in the UK.

#### ▪ Where we are now

Primary languages are now taught to at least one year group in curriculum time in 92% of schools, and 69% of schools offer a language to all pupils in Key Stage 2.

**Children's progress and positive attitudes** towards language learning are clear. They enjoy language lessons, understand the importance of learning another language and are developing awareness of other cultures.

**Achievement is rated good or outstanding** in almost 60% of primary schools.<sup>i</sup>

**Senior leaders and teachers** show high levels of commitment and recognise the value of language learning and its positive impact on personal and social development and literacy.<sup>ii</sup>

The **majority of schools and teachers** have received effective and **high-quality CPD training**; supported by local co-ordinators, subject leaders have been trained in **nearly 90%** of primary schools.

In **initial teacher education a variety of training models and routes** have been developed for primary language specialist teachers. Over 6000 new teachers have been trained as primary specialists with a language.

Since 2005 over **£160 million** has been invested in primary languages, mainly in schools and local authorities.

The successful introduction of languages in Key Stage 2 in England paves the way to a future in which all children will benefit from early language learning. The enthusiasm, achievement and commitment amongst children of all abilities, subject co-ordinators, teachers and head teachers involved in the primary languages initiative are evident in a wide range of research and case studies. They are testament to the huge collaborative effort of many people, who, supported by a national framework and infrastructure, have laid the foundation for the future of early language learning in this country.

### ▪ **New challenges and priorities for the future**

If we are to offer children opportunities that compare favourably with other countries throughout the world, a continued framework of support for early language learning is essential.

**Yet the signs are that progress to date is fragile and that the primary languages initiative is not yet sustainable in schools. In particular primary languages are not yet statutory.**

It is important that we support and safeguard provision and do not regress ten years to a time when early language learning was a privilege available to a minority of children, in private schools or in clubs and after school.

Our **priorities** for urgent action by policy-makers in government and education are to:

- Ensure that the **considerable successes and quality of provision** in primary languages achieved to date are maintained and that **momentum is not lost. This could be done by an early indication that languages in Key Stage 2 will be statutory.**
- **Provide a coherent curriculum** that has **clear progression within and across Key Stages** so that language teaching in England compares favourably with that in other countries. The recently announced curriculum review provides an opportunity for making this happen.
- Continue to **support training of staff in schools and those who are training to teach** so that primary languages are sustainable in the long term. With funding now largely devolved to schools, it will be important to develop new forms of collaboration and mutual support.

If we are to prepare children for their future in a global world, a coherent experience of learning languages from an early age is not a luxury. It is essential.

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<sup>i</sup> *Modern languages – Achievement and challenge 2007–2010* (Ofsted, 2011)

<sup>ii</sup> *Primary modern languages: Language learning at Key Stage 2, a longitudinal study* (The Open University, Christ Church University Canterbury and University of Southampton, commissioned by DCSF, January 2010)