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SCOTTISH OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AU

Prime Minister

Brian Gough has seen no difficulties
with this. Content subject to the
views of colleagues. 22 July 1988

Paul Gray Esq
Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
LONDON

Rec'd
22/7

Yes not

Dear Paul

TEACHING OF LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH

My Secretary of State has been considering the position of the teaching of languages other than English in Scottish schools in the light of advice from the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum. I attach a draft of a statement which he proposes to make by way of Written Parliamentary Reply. It takes account of the Council's advice but goes further than their recommendations in 2 important respects. We believe it is right, as in England and Wales, to move to the position where all children study at least one modern foreign language in the compulsory years of secondary school and have set 1992 as the target date. This allows time for teaching resources to be redeployed and accords well with the advent of the single European market. No overall increase in teaching or other resources will be involved. Secondly, Mr Rifkind wishes to give further consideration to the teaching of languages in the primary school, although he recognises that this will necessarily be a longer term goal.

I should be glad to know if the Prime Minister and the other members of E(EP), to whose Private Secretaries I am copying this letter, are content that a statement in the attached terms should be made. I would be grateful for a reply if possible by close on Monday 25 July so that we can answer the question before the House rises.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Jones

PP- DAVID CRAWLEY
Private Secretary

TUESDAY 26 JULY 1988

WRITTEN

HOUSE OF COMMONS

MR ALLAN STEWART: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what his policy is for the teaching of languages other than English in Scottish schools.

MR MALCOLM RIFKIND:

The teaching of foreign languages in our secondary schools has for long been an important element in the education of the ablest pupils. Against the background of achievement and expansion in other areas of the curriculum in recent years, it is right that the position of languages should now be more clearly defined.

A modern foreign language is currently studied by some 40% of each year cohort in S3 and S4 and by less than 10% thereafter. These figures are much too low.

A modern foreign language is already a core element for pupils in S1 and S2 but all pupils, and not just the more able, should continue their experience of at least one modern foreign language beyond this level. Recent developments in language teaching make this increasingly capable of achievement and my aim is that by 1992 it should be the norm for pupils to study at least 1 modern foreign language throughout the compulsory years of secondary school. I intend to ask education authorities to give priority to this. I would also expect a second foreign language to be provided in those years for pupils who wished it and to see an increasing proportion of pupils continuing the study of languages into S5 and S6.

For long the principal modern foreign language taught in our schools has been French and this is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. But other languages, particularly those of our main European partners, have strong claims to be more widely

studied and I shall be asking education authorities to consider how opportunities for the study of these languages can be increased.

The study of Latin and Greek has declined in recent years in face of the expanding curriculum. The classical languages, nonetheless, represent an important part of our heritage and provide a valuable educative experience. It is right that opportunities for their study should continue to be available and encouraged. I shall therefore be asking education authorities to ensure that some schools in each area continue to offer these languages.

Currently, the teaching of foreign languages takes place only in the secondary school. Attempts to introduce language teaching in primary school have not previously met with success. Nevertheless, I believe there is a good case for beginning the study of foreign languages at the primary stage and I intend to consider how progress towards this end can be made.

I turn now to Gaelic and Asian languages.

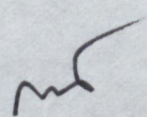
Gaelic is a living part of the Scottish heritage and culture and I reaffirm our general policy of support for the learning and teaching of the Gaelic language and the teaching of other subjects through Gaelic where these facilities can be provided and where there is demand for them. Difficulties can arise in fitting Gaelic along with a modern European language into an already crowded timetable but new courses and materials, for learners and native speakers alike, should help in overcoming these difficulties and ensuring a healthy uptake of the subject.

Asian languages are the heritage of a significant number of our population and it is right that these languages and the traditions they represent should be respected and fostered. At the same time it is important to impart to all our children a good knowledge of English and in the primary school those languages have a particular role in acting as a bridge to proficiency in English. In the secondary school the considerations which apply to Gaelic are again relevant but the scarcity of trained teachers and teaching materials are particular limiting factors.

In formulating these policies I have taken account of the statement of position by the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum entitled "The Provision of Languages other than English in Primary and Secondary Schools in Scotland". I am arranging for a copy to be placed in the Library.

I shall shortly ask education authorities to put in hand the action necessary to implement the policies I have outlined. These have implications for the management of schools and because they must be implemented within planned provision will involve a gradual switch of resources to language departments from other departments. The pace of implementation will depend on local circumstances but in the majority of cases resources should allow these policies to be implemented within the timescale envisaged.

For too long we have lagged behind our European partners and competitors in the matter of linguistic competence. In view of our growing links with Europe and the advent of the single European market in 1992 it is time to arrest and reverse that trend. A major effort will be required and I ask education authorities, teachers and all concerned with educational provision to join with me in ensuring that rapid progress is made.



SCOTTISH OFFICE

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SKW



cc: Policy Unit

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

25 July 1988

Dear David,

TEACHING OF LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH

The Prime Minister has seen your letter to me dated 22 July. Subject to the views of colleagues she is content for your Secretary of State to make the proposed statement by way of a Written Parliamentary reply.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to members of E(EP).

Yours,
Paul

(PAUL GRAY)

David Crawley, Esq.,
Scottish Office.

SKW



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ccp

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REC 6

26/7

Dear David

TEACHING OF LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH

26 July 1958

Har

My Secretary of State has seen the draft statement attached to your letter of 22 July to Paul Gray.

He is content with the draft, subject to two points. First, the statement is rightly supportive of classics, but does not make clear whether your Secretary of State expects classics to be studied in addition to rather than instead of at least one modern foreign language. We assume that is your intention; if it is not, comparisons will certainly be drawn between the policy in Scotland and that reflected in the National Curriculum in England and Wales, and there is no obvious reason why the policy should differ. I hope therefore that you will feel able to amend the paragraph on classics eg by adding "in addition to the study of a modern foreign language" after "opportunities for their study".

Secondly, the next paragraph in the statement - on language study in primary schools - goes rather further than the English policy statement on modern foreign languages in the curriculum in encouraging primary study of a language. Our National Curriculum legislation does not of course require study of a foreign language in the primary phase and we are concerned about the teacher supply and training implications of encouraging primary study of a language. Again there is no evident reason why policies in Scotland and England should differ. Would your Secretary of State be prepared to tone down the last sentence in the paragraph eg to read "Nevertheless, I intend to consider how progress can be made towards introducing the study of foreign languages at the primary stage"?

I am copying this letter to Paul Gray and to Private Secretaries to other members of E(EP).

Yours,

TOM

T B JEFFERY
Private Secretary

EDUCATION: Policy PT 19 -

