

ESRC Festival of Social Science: Primary Language Policy in England – A call to action

Saturday 9th November, Institute of Education, University College London
10.00 – 16.00 - FREE EVENT



If you have been following us for the past two years, you will know that we have been working hard to try to convince policy makers and other stakeholders that language learning in primary schools needs to be taken more seriously!

We convened a summit nearly a year ago bringing together all major national stakeholders to assess the situation and propose solutions. This led to the publication last March of the RiPL White Paper Primary Language Policy in England – The Way Forward (Holmes and Myles 2019).



We are now moving to the next steps. We would like to put together a draft implementation strategy which will aim to put into practice the ten recommendations of the White Paper. To that effect, we are again bringing together major stakeholders and language professionals in order to devise such a strategy. Come and join us and have your say! The implementation strategy will bring together all our views!

Florence Myles and Bernardette Holmes (Chair and Co-Chair, RiPL)

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Learning a modern or ancient language became a part of the statutory curriculum for England from September 2014. Five years into the new policy, there are still significant challenges in meeting national curriculum requirements, leading to inequity from school to school and region to region.

The [Research in Primary Languages Network](#) (RiPL) is organising a call to action on primary languages, bringing together leading figures from the language community, researchers and practitioners to plan and discuss the next steps for primary language policy in England.

This event will address key issues affecting the success of primary languages and put 10 recommendations from the recently published [RiPL White Paper](#) to the test. Come and join leading practitioners and policy makers in an interactive day where your views will directly feed into a **draft implementation strategy** to inform **the way forward** for primary languages in England.

The session will take inspiration from the World Café process, combining short inputs, followed by small round table discussion of key questions, captured by graphic recording/posters, leading to plenary feedback at the end, connecting main findings and agreeing points for action.

Attention and funding seem to be exclusively focused on KS3 and GCSE uptake at the moment. However, for these initiatives to be successful, it is crucial that KS2 provides a sound foundation for KS3, and for children to progress smoothly across the stages, if they are not to become demotivated and turned off languages!

DRAFT PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME— [PDF Download](#)

These are the questions we aim to address:

Question 1: WHAT? - CURRICULUM CONTENT: **What should primary children know and be able to do in the language by the end of Key Stage 2?**

Question 2: WHO? - TEACHER SUPPLY AND TRAINING : **How do we make sure that we have sufficient teachers with the subject and pedagogic knowledge required to teach primary languages effectively across the country?**

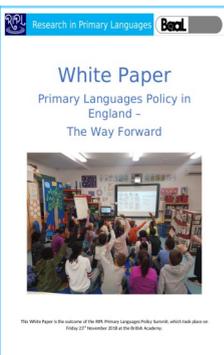
Question 3: WHEN? - TIME AND CURRICULUM PLANNING: **How do we provide and safeguard sufficient time in the primary curriculum to teach the full requirements of the national curriculum and reach national expectations?**

Question 4: PROGRESS, ASSESSMENT AND TRANSITION: **How can we assess and record progress across the key stage, maintain learners' motivation and support smooth transition from primary to secondary schools?**

Question 5: TECHNOLOGY: **To what extent can technology provide solutions to some of the challenges facing schools in delivering primary languages? (Strengthening teachers' subject knowledge and language skills; connecting teacher networks; and enriching the learning experience of children in key stage 2)**

Question 6: QUALITY AND LEADERSHIP: **How do we evaluate the quality of our own language teaching and how are our schools evaluating the quality of the languages curriculum across the key stage? How do we ensure equity of provision across the country?**

White Paper: Primary Languages Policy in England – The Way Forward



The ten [summary recommendations](#) from the RiPL White Paper:

1. Time allocation at least one hour per week, a non-statutory minimum of 140 hours over KS2;
2. Government-funded professional development for primary teachers to strengthen primary language subject knowledge, pedagogical understanding and language proficiency;
3. Curriculum planning: commission non-statutory guidance on minimum core content defining what children should know/be able to do in pronunciation, phonics, grammatical structures, vocabulary and knowledge about language;
4. Transition: strengthen primary-secondary collaboration; provide

receiving schools with a clear statement of what pupils have been taught and what they should know and be able to do at the point of transfer;

5. Assessment and reporting: agree a nationally recognized benchmark by the age of transfer from KS2 to KS3;

6. Develop effective use of digital technology to support learning, training and reporting, including the development and piloting of an e-portfolio;

7. School accountability: Ofsted should include a focus on primary languages, gathering evidence of intent, implementation and impact related to curriculum planning;

8. School leadership: Develop effective partnerships between senior leadership and governors to strengthen accountability and improve coherent and structured progression in primary languages in the school development plan;

9. Strategic role of research: The DfE to include a focus on the implementation of primary languages policy in the next round of social research aims, to garner high quality evidence to inform policy development and KS2 delivery.

10. Create a National Taskforce for Primary Languages (NTPL) to support school-led improvement in the teaching of primary languages, to build the foundation of future language learning at KS3 and increase uptake at KS4 and beyond.



Join the call to action on primary languages!
We don't want our children to miss out on enjoyment and career opportunities and as a nation to lack business opportunity

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A vibrant network of researchers and teacher practitioners engaging through RiPL