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Publication: June 2010

Allow Latin for Language Learners! Writers, public figures and primary teachers endorse plea by Oxford Classicists to Education Secretary in Politeia pamphlet. Michael Gove urged to reverse Labour's discrimination against Latin in the primary curriculum

The Education ministers have now confirmed they will drop Labour's new primary curriculum. But already, the plan for *modern* foreign language teaching has been brought in by the back door. Whatever the general pros and cons of this plan, it has one alarming feature: it vetoes Latin. Politeia's new pamphlet, *Latin for Language Learners: Opening Opportunity for Primary Pupils*, urges the Secretary of State to reverse the *status quo*. The call is endorsed by a group of distinguished writers and public figures, including the playwright Tom Stoppard and Ian Hislop, editor of *Private Eye*, as well as by primary teachers from some of London's inner city schools.

The authors, Professor Christopher Pelling and Dr Llewelyn Morgan,* explain the academic and educational advantages of learning Latin. It helps with written and spoken English and with foreign languages. It improves the skills needed for maths and other subjects. It helps to overcome social disadvantage, and it provides the cultural background needed to understand the literary and historical heritage neglected by the dumbed-down curriculum of today's schools. Teaching materials are readily available (some of the details are given in the pamphlet) and in London the Iris Project has brought Latin teaching to a number of inner city primary schools, whilst in Oxford the Faculty offers free Latin teaching to local schools.

Detailed research from the US bears out statistically that the academic standards of pupils learning Latin are higher than for their peers who did not learn Latin. In particular, learning Latin:

- Improves standards in reading, comprehension and vocabulary.
- Improves maths and logical thinking.
- Leads to higher than average scores in standard tests.
- Helps the acquisition of other foreign languages.

The authors also show that Latin will fit the official remit for primary-school foreign-language teaching, and that its teaching and assessment could be presented under the approved headings of 'Literacy', 'Oracy' and 'Intercultural Understanding'.

As the Secretary of State prepares for the next announcement on the primary curriculum, the authors urge that the government *allows* Latin to have the same official support as already given to modern foreign languages in primary schools. **In particular, the DfE veto on Latin should be removed and official guidance changed to give Latin the same support as given to other foreign languages. In any future measures or guidance, Latin should be treated on a par with other foreign languages.**

***Christopher Pelling is Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford and Dr Llewelyn Morgan is Fellow and Tutor in Classics at Brasenose College, Oxford**

To view a PDF version of the *Latin for Language Learners* pamphlet, go to www.politeia.co.uk/publications