

APEEE statement**Background**

Until recently L2 FR/EN has been taught in mixed-ability groups. These were complemented by a separate beginners' group where necessary, as well as a so-called "bilingual group" for children with very strong proficiency in their L2. The aim of this approach was to facilitate learning for all students while taking account of the learning needs of those at the two ends of the spectrum, regarded as qualitatively different to mainstream L2 learners.

The school management is currently in the process of making changes to the way classes for these subjects are grouped. As the APEEE understands it, the school management intends to establish classes with a broader range of linguistic ability, to be supplemented by so-called "enrichment classes" (the "bilingual" group will be abolished). Under this approach, a small number of students from each class who are considered the most advanced are to be offered the opportunity to attend enrichment classes a number of times a week in lieu of their regular L2 classes. At the same time, they will remain integrated in the mainstream class for the rest of their lessons. An exception is to be made for beginners, who are to be placed in a separate class for a period before being integrated into the mixed-ability classes. The school has informed us that new system is to be rolled out from September 2019 across the primary cycle and, for secondary, initially for classes at the beginning of the separate cycles (i.e. S1 and S4). Classes halfway through a cycle will retain the present structure to avoid disruption. Enrichment classes are to be offered until the end of S5 and will be funded from the educational support budget.

APEEE position

The APEEE notes the school management's move to revise the current system. Parents support a system that:

- ensures that the requirements of the syllabus are met and that each student is enabled to reach the standard required for the European Baccalaureate;
- takes into account the wide range of students' linguistic backgrounds and abilities;
- gives all students, including those at both the lowest and highest attainment levels, the opportunity to progress in classes appropriate to their level.

The APEEE would like to remind the school management about the comments made in the Whole School Inspection report, namely that the school's performance should be improved in terms of meeting students' individual needs in both planning and teaching.

The APEEE expresses its concern that the process of adopting changes has been approached hastily and without prior consultation of students or parents. The APEEE reminds the school that in this stakeholder system, it is important to consult with parents, teachers and students to ensure they are on board with such large-scale and far-reaching changes as those proposed. Furthermore there is a lack of transparency as to how the current system was evaluated and the new approach devised. The APEEE regrets that the process was started very late in the academic year and highlights the risk this may pose in terms of ensuring a well-designed policy and smooth roll-out from September 2019. The APEEE notes that the information on the website has been updated regarding [primary](#), but no reference can yet be found regarding secondary.

The APEEE therefore calls on the school management to:

- communicate to parents: the management should directly inform parents and students before the end of term about the proposed changes and clearly explain the policy and timeline for selecting children for the different groups at the start of the new school year. Information about the secondary programme on the school website should be updated;
- ensure that no student is disadvantaged under the new approach: the management must ensure that neither those who need extra support nor those with native or near-native proficiency lose out under the new approach. While acknowledging that there may be an advantage for the majority to have a wider range of levels within the same classroom, we are concerned that the latter group of students, in particular, will be put at a disadvantage compared to the status quo and not be given enough opportunity to develop their full potential. The new approach must not be implemented at the expense of any student or group of students;
- facilitate the transition to secondary: cooperation between primary and secondary teachers in the transition from P5 to S1 should be strengthened, in order to facilitate organisation of L2 groups, particularly regarding SWALS students, who do not attend L2 classes in primary;
- evaluate the new approach: the management should undertake to review the new approach halfway through the next academic year, with formal consultation of all stakeholders through the appropriate bodies, to examine whether further changes are required to the policy before it is established. This should include an objective comparison of the current approach with the new one.