

24 JAN 2008

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 020 7421 6762
Direct F 020 7421 6546
christine.gilbert@ofsted.gov.uk



22 January 2008

Mr John Dunford
General Secretary
Association of Schools and College Leaders
130 Regent Road
Leicester
LE1 7PG

Christine Gilbert
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

Dear John,

Modern Foreign Languages and Ofsted Inspections

Thank you for your letter of 7 January 2008, received here on 9 January 2008.

As you say in your letter, the issue of relative difficulty of GCSEs is a matter for the QCA.

The overall CVA of a school is just one measure used by inspectors. Through RAISEonline they have access to a basket of measures which gives them a rounded picture of the school's performance. This, together with local knowledge, provides them with enough detailed information to develop hypotheses for further investigation during their inspection of the school. The basket of measures includes the levels of attainment in a school, including in individual Key Stage 4 subjects such as MFL, and CVA measures for English and mathematics. These subject-level CVA measures in particular provide useful context for the inspector in interpreting the overall CVA score.

We are aware that those schools and colleges which have retained languages for all or for the large majority of pupils often have lower average GCSE results for languages than other schools where a smaller proportion of the cohort choose to take a language. This will be acknowledged in Ofsted's forthcoming three-year report for languages.

However, it would be inappropriate for any inspector to question the school's decision to gain specialist language status. There are many good reasons why a school should aim for modern language qualifications for all pupils, not the least the benefits for individuals and for national competitiveness, and many specialist language colleges are in the vanguard in this respect.

I am therefore concerned to read in your letter the allegation that more than one school has had their decision to gain specialist language status questioned.

Thank you for alerting us to this, it is an issue that has not been raised before. We intend to monitor the situation carefully.

Thank you for contacting me. If Ofsted can be of further help, please let me know.

With every good will
Chris

Christine Gilbert