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Rt Hon Alan Johnson MP

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Thank you for your letter of 9 May. We discussed this briefly when we met last week.

I am grateful for your contribution to the debate about the severe grading of modern foreign language GCSEs. Lord Dearing consulted widely with language teachers, heads and stakeholders throughout his review. He identified that there is a widely held perception that language GCSEs are harder than other subjects. The Languages Review, published in March 2007, recommended that this issue is resolved by a definitive study and that the results of this study are published.

I agree with you that these negative perceptions are having an adverse impact on the number of pupils taking GCSE languages, and that it is important to resolve the issue as soon as possible. I have therefore agreed with the Review recommendation, and asked the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) to consider whether languages are more demanding than other subjects and to provide me with advice. I would like to wait until I have this advice before making any decisions about changing grade boundaries. I don't feel it would be helpful to ask you to carry out a separate review but would really welcome your input to the work the QCA are undertaking. I have discussed this with Sue Horner at QCA who will be expecting to hear from you. Her contact details are 020 7509 5533 or horners@qca.org.uk.

Thank you for raising this issue with me and please keep me updated as this work progresses.

ALAN JOHNSON

Cc: David Mansfield, David Wilson & Duncan Byrne

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