

department for

education and skills

creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

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Directors of Children's Services

22 June 2006

Dear Colleague,

School Census 2007 – Collection of Pupil Language Data

As you may already be aware, the 2007 School Census will include a new Pupil First Language question. This will allow schools to record each pupil's first language, rather than simply recording whether or not that language is English, as they currently do. Completion of this question using the new, more detailed language categories is not compulsory. However, on the basis of initial consultation, we expect a significant majority of Local Authorities will want to take this opportunity to develop a better picture of bilingual learners in their area.

Colleagues in your Authority who lead on data collection and ethnic minority achievement have already been contacted about these changes and may have attended last month's Pupil Language Data Conferences. They may already have considered how best to advise schools in the light of these changes, and I feel sure that they will enjoy your full support. However, I would like to take this opportunity to tell you a little about the changes, and the benefits of collecting pupil language data using the new list.

Linked to other data in the School Census, the likely benefits of good quality language data to schools, LAs and central Government will include:

- better information for schools about their pupils including those transferring to them;
- better knowledge for schools about the communities they serve;
- better information at school, local and national level on the attainment of pupils and in particular of those learning English as an additional language (EAL);
- more effective allocation and targeting of language support resources, including bilingual support and interpreting and translation provision;
- better identification of bilingual learners' language needs.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

In summary, analysis of the pupil cohort by first language will better equip all of us working in education to personalise our offer to children and learners. I hope that your Authority will consider using the new list: if not in the 2007 Census, then in future years.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A McCully', written in a cursive style.

Andrew McCully
Director, School Standards

Full details of the new arrangements are available online at:
www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ethnicminorities.