

Consortium of Gujarati Schools

Responses to questions from Rupanjana Dutta of Gujarat Samachar/ Asian Voice

1) Is it true there a drop in number of students taking GCSE?

Yes, there has been a steady decline in numbers over the last few years.

2) If yes, do you know why?

- a) It is not just in Gujarati that the numbers have dropped. Modern Foreign Language entries have dropped by nearly 20 % over the years which shows a declining interest in learning languages in our schools in the UK overall.
- b) Many of our modern Gujarati parents are themselves less equipped to help their children at home whereas previously it was not the case. The Saturday/Sunday schools offer only an hour's Gujarati a week which needs support from home that is not available.
- c) There is a bigger difference in the quality of teaching, learning, resources and expertise between mainstream and supplementary schools than in the past. This has an impact on children's interest and motivation to study Gujarati in supplementary schools.

3) Have you approached the Department of Education, highlighting your concerns?

The officers of the Consortium of Gujarati Schools met with Andrew Fisher and John Hopper at the DfE on 3rd February 2016, highlighting our concerns and seeking their support with teacher development and the rising rents and accommodation costs incurred by Gujarati supplementary schools. Both had a negative impact on intake numbers.

4) And how has the government responded?

They heard us in silence. They were tight-lipped and did not wish to give any information except to say that the DfE was still in consultation with the examination boards. They, however, did agree to brief Nick Gibb MP with responsibility in this area about our concerns. They did agree to express our concern to the exam boards and to Ofqual. But kept emphasising that exam boards are independent bodies - as are schools. We then had to remind them about the government's duties to address minority concerns in a democracy - because schools and exam boards are also a part of the community, not independent of it.

5) Do you think the government will do away with Gujarati in GCSE soon?

We certainly hope that does not happen. We will be extremely angry and deeply disappointed if that happens.

6) How do you propose to preserve it?

- a) We are meeting the two Harrow MPs Gareth Thomas and Bob Blackman on Friday 4th March 2016 to brief them and to plan the next course of action.
- b) We have formed the Consortium of Gujarati Schools to help supplementary schools increase numbers, to improve the quality of teaching, learning and leadership and to make the Gujarati community more aware of the benefits of being bilingual by learning another language - Gujarati.
- c) We have formulated an Action Plan to support our schools.
- d) We plan to mount our first course for Gujarati teachers on 2nd April 2016.
- e) There is a lot more on our agenda and we are working on these issues with passion and zeal.

We look forward, through you, to the support from the whole of the Gujarati community.

Jayantilal Tanna
Chair, Consortium of Gujarati Schools

Vijya Bhandari
Secretary, Consortium of Gujarati School