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## **BACK TO SCHOOL FOR GCHQ LINGUISTS**

GCHQ is launching an initiative that will see linguists reaching out to schools to help boost the study of foreign languages.

At a time when university admissions are increasing in the UK, the number of students taking language degrees is falling dramatically. This could impact on the work of GCHQ, probably the largest employer of professional linguists in the country, and the intelligence centre is taking positive steps to reverse this trend.

On Friday, 18th November linguists at GCHQ will welcome a group of language and career teachers from the South West area to Cheltenham to offer help in persuading pupils to stick with language studies. The visit will provide an overview of the skills linguists might be expected to display in working for the department. There will also be an opportunity to experience 'taster' language lessons in some less commonly taught languages. The initiative aims to supplement visits made to local schools by GCHQ linguists, where they engage directly with students to encourage the development of language skills. A spokesman commented: "Our linguists are already used to going out to local schools in the Cheltenham area to assist students in choosing their examination or career options and to celebrate events such as the European Day of Languages."

He continued: "It's essential that we maintain a cadre of top quality linguists at GCHQ, and we very much hope that this initiative will encourage gifted pupils to stick with languages and then, possibly come and work for us."

GCHQ's forerunner (the Government Code and Cipher School) was instrumental in cracking German ciphers during World War II. The organisation still employ a large number of linguists - specialising in over 70 languages - who are key players in providing HM Government with intelligence that helps counter threats from terrorists, serious crime, and weapons proliferation programmes, and also lends support to the operations of allied forces.

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