

1+2 Evaluation visit to Anderson High School, Shetland

Title of the project: Additional languages suited to the local context, as an enhancement at S3

Aims of the project:

1. To give every young person at S3 the opportunity to learn a second language in addition to their first additional language, as one option for a short course.
2. To place the additional language within the context of local and/or Scottish economy and culture, with the emphasis on local employment opportunities and personal choice.
3. To present most of the young people involved for the new SQA Languages for Life and Work Award (LLW), at SCQF level 4 or 3.

Discussion of self-evaluation paper: key messages from the school

Background

Currently, young people learn either French or German from P6 onwards. Programmes of work are agreed at regular meetings with the associated primary schools. All young people are able to continue with the language learned at P6/P7. A few young people choose to begin a second language (French or German) in addition to the first modern language, from S3. At S4, almost all young people are working toward new National Qualifications in the language learned since P6. At S5/S6, modern languages are optional but the school is delivering French and German from Intermediate 1 to Advanced Higher. There is also a dedicated German class for a few young people with additional support needs who have already achieved Access 2 in French. The Scottish Languages Baccalaureate is offered, but there are no candidates this session.

For the 1+2 pilot, all young people at S3 were given the option to take an additional language for one period per week, over the whole year. The languages offered were either Spanish or Norwegian, in separate classes. The Spanish classes have 21 and 25 pupils respectively, and the Norwegian classes have 9 and 6 pupils.

Resources/methodology

To ensure a broad experience, the school has organised visits to the classes by native speakers of both languages, including a Cuban national for Spanish, and a Norwegian national on the school staff.

The school has also sought contact with young people in schools abroad. A link has been forged with a school in Castro del Río in Andalucía. Young people from two schools in the Bergen area of Norway are already corresponding with the school. Most of these Norwegian pupils have visited Shetland and spent a day with their Shetland counterparts through the school's popular Norwegian Club.

The Norwegian Club takes place outwith lesson times, but most of the young people who are learning Norwegian take part. Its main focus is on links with the Norwegian sail training ship *Statsraad Lehmkuhl*, which regularly comes to Shetland with teenage trainees. Two visits by the ship in 2013 were very successful, involving activities in school, combined tours of parts of Shetland, and evenings on board the ship. The Norwegian Club regularly attracts over 20 young people and engages in a range of activities relating to Norway and its connections with Shetland. The popularity of the Norwegian Club is testament to the strong local connection with Norway.

In each of the pilot classes, there is a wide range of ability. Teachers have focused on promoting basic communicative competence. The Spanish classes, which are larger, were taught a range of vocabulary relevant to personal conversation initially, with less emphasis on grammar at that stage. In the Norwegian classes, which are much smaller, there is a greater focus on grammar, partly through optional homework. Since these pilot courses are not part of the young people's subject choice for national qualifications, the school decided that homework would not be compulsory.

Although there are no formal interdisciplinary links, there are informal references to a wide range of subjects such as geography and music. Home economics colleagues will enable some Spanish cooking later in the session, and have already helped the Norwegian Club make waffles. The school has plans for the classes to meet representatives of the local tourist office and Spanish and Norwegian representatives of the fish marketing business. The pilot work is being closely linked to employment and the local context.

Children's experiences and achievements

The teachers feel that the young people involved have engaged extremely well with the project overall. In written feedback in September, the classes showed real enthusiasm and an interesting range of reasons for this. Examples of such feedback are:

'I enjoy Spanish because it is useful for my French and also very interesting how it is linked with other languages. It is also helping me learn more about the country Spain.'

'I chose Norwegian because I heard that oil companies look for Norwegian speakers.'

'I am interested in Norway and Shetland's links with it. I am enjoying learning Norwegian and am looking forward to learning more.'

The school was confident that most of the young people studying Spanish would be able to achieve the Languages for Life and Work award at Level 3 by the end of the session.

Support for learners

In Norwegian, the small numbers allow for a lot of peer support, closely supported by the teacher. In Spanish, extra support from a native speaker who is not a teacher was planned from November, to assist in conducting conversations in class.

Successes of the pilot (from the self-evaluation)

Staff feel that, since there is only one lesson a week and homework is optional, there are limitations on what can be achieved. Despite this, they feel that many young people are making real progress in their language skills. Staff are pleased by the large number of young people who opted for the pilot and by their subsequent enthusiasm for learning a new language. Teachers have been equally enthusiastic and have embraced the opportunity to create new courses in partnership with their pupils.

Staff feel the project is having a very positive impact on attitudes to languages in the school and the wider community. Even amongst those who are not involved, the pilot has promoted a sense that it is natural and useful to acquire skills in other languages.

The school management team has undertaken to repeat the project next session. It is also considering whether the existing classes may be able to continue with the new language in S4 and perhaps, in the case of Spanish, aim for a National 4 qualification.

Issues arising (from the self-evaluation)

The teachers, and a few of the pupils, feel some frustration at how little can be achieved with just one period per week. Staff would prefer a double period, or a single 75 minute period.

Overall evaluation by Education Scotland based on evidence during the visit

Modern languages are a strong feature of life at Anderson High School. The school has good links with the associated primaries and is clear about the work covered at the primary stages. This enables the secondary department to build on this work and avoid unnecessary repetition. Young people study French or German at S1, in keeping with their primary experience, and have the option to choose the second language in addition at S3. There is a class at S4 for those pupils with additional support needs. The school is very clear that all young people can benefit from learning another language.

In keeping with the 1+2 policy, modern languages are compulsory at S3. Young people choose 7 subjects for S4. The school offers a choice of short courses at S3 for one period per week. For this, young people had the choice between a language or a rotation of art and design, CDT and ICT. The languages option of Spanish or Norwegian has proved popular. The department has made conscious links between the pilot language and the other language studied in order to promote language learning overall. Homework is optional and staff feel it is difficult to make progress in

a language without learning vocabulary at home. However, the young people themselves do the optional homework for the most part but like having the option not to do it, if there are other competing pressures linked to their full course options.

Staff and young people have found the one period per week allocated to the course to be 'tight'. The school is sympathetic to this and, given the success of the pilot, intends to offer the course again next session with an increased time allocation. This would allow more time for group work. Most of the young people have said they would continue the project into S4 if they were given the option to do so. They are excited at the thought of using what they have learned on holiday for example.

There is also scope to introduce this award at S5/S6, in order to encourage young people who may not have chosen a language at S4 to return to language learning later, with an eye to employment prospects. The course could be run with French or German also, for those who have learned only one of these languages in the past. The young people involved in the pilot have benefited from an enhancement to their curriculum which has inspired them and which they feel will be of use to them in the future. They are keen to learn more languages.

Initially, the PT curriculum intended to achieve a qualification in Norwegian before the start of the pilot. This did not prove possible due to the difficulty of sourcing an appropriate course. However, he has now begun to do so and recently completed an initial course in Norway. Norwegian is not currently available as one of the languages which contribute to the Languages for Life and Work award. However, the school is exploring ways of accrediting young people's learning. The PT curriculum, himself a highly competent linguist, intends to continue with his studies. The young people are aware that he is also learning and are further inspired by their teacher's commitment. In the interim, young people have benefited from learning Norwegian as an enhancement to their school experience which has motivated them and which they feel will be of use to them in the future.

The teachers involved in the project are very positive about its impact and its potential for growth. They themselves have found it liberating not to be teaching a full course leading to a national examination. They feel there is real flexibility in doing a Languages for Life and Work course and that 1+2 'frees you up' to allow greater flexibility. All members of staff have been kept up-to-date with the project.

The languages staff have made cultural links for both Spanish and Norwegian which have motivated young people to learn. For example, in the Norwegian lesson, young people were encouraged to see the links between Norwegian and words in their own local Shetland dialect. Visits to class from native speakers and, in the case of Norwegian, links with a Norwegian ship which visits Lerwick at regular intervals, have further maintained pupils' interest. The school has set up 25 penfriend links with Norway and learners are developing their decoding skills through reading these letters. A native Norwegian speaker has supported the Norwegian class and the teacher. For both languages, the school has plans to make links with the tourism and fish industries for work related themes. This will further enhance the relevance of learning these languages to young people.

Young people in the Norwegian class were very engaged in their learning. The class teacher used the language whenever possible for classroom interaction and learners demonstrated good comprehension. They engaged in activities using all four key language skills. They coped well with simple dialogues. They were developing their literacy skills well in learning how to work out meaning for example. Expectations were high and all young people were challenged to achieve but were well supported by the teacher. Young people benefited from helpful word banks and grammar sheets and supported each other very well.

Those young people studying Spanish had concentrated on personal information and had built up a bank of vocabulary and sentences so that they could hold simple conversations early on, in order to motivate them. They coped well with this and demonstrated good comprehension in class activities. Those studying Spanish will be presented for the LLW award in Spanish and the school is hopeful that they will achieve this.

In both classes, young people were able to communicate using simple language covering straightforward contexts such as personal information. Lessons moved at a good pace and expectations were high. The use of the target language for classroom interactions supported young people in their language development. There was a very positive ethos for learning. Young people are confident in their learning and keen to develop their fluency. They are learning techniques for deciphering language. They have found that their first modern language helps them with their second although they say they sometimes mix up German and Norwegian!

All young people are being challenged in their learning. However, there is scope to profile their progress through simple ongoing assessment in class of their development of the four skills, particularly in examples of spontaneous speaking, in addition to any tests. This profile would help them understand their own progress and skills clearly.

All feel confident speaking and all said they would choose this course again. They see a purpose in their learning, both for holidays and for employment opportunities. The course materials and themes are addressing both personal and work themes. They are growing in their knowledge of the country where the language is spoken and are comparing the culture with their own. The challenge is to ensure that all contexts for learning are at the right level of maturity for older pupils, even though they are beginners in the language.

Both teachers have plans to introduce additional relevant contexts for learning and consolidation through links with more native speakers. This would include regular Spanish visitors who come to Shetland through the fishing industry and the town's established links with Norway through the tall ship visits. As the school continues to develop this work, the potential impact of the pilot is a sustainable future for additional language study in the school.