

Evaluation visit to Dalmarnock Primary School, Glasgow

Title of the project: Expansion and progression of 1+2 languages

Aims of the project:

To give all children exposure to at least two European languages throughout their schooling. To increase knowledge and awareness of cultural differences and similarities.

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

Background

The school was formed six years ago with the merging of four smaller schools. The school roll was 284 at the time of the visit, with 11 classes. The school had a Comenius Assistant from Italy, from October 2013 until Easter 2014. There has been an increase in the number of children with English as an additional language, with the number at 38 at the time of the visit. These children are native speakers of French, Polish, Mandarin, Arabic, Pashtu, Urdu, Cantonese, Punjabi or Italian.

French is the language which continues into the associated secondary school and has always been introduced from P5. Last session, with support from the Glasgow City Council modern languages team, the school introduced Italian to P7 as most of the children put in placing requests for a nearby secondary school where Italian is taught. The team also supported the school in the introduction of Spanish as part of transition work with a local nursery.

The school had a number of teachers trained, or in training, for MLPS, in French, German or Spanish. In addition, the headteacher speaks Greek and has used her knowledge to introduce a masterclass where children learn some Greek vocabulary and learn aspects of Greek culture.

Children have one formal language lesson per week. This lasts for 30-45 minutes for Spanish and 1 hour for French. The children also have a session of physical education where French is reinforced. This takes the form of simple games to reinforce colour, numbers and compass points for example.

Resources/methodology

In session 2013-14, the school extended Spanish teaching from P1 to P3. This involves talking and listening activities only at the moment. The school also introduced French at P4, following a more structured programme, with more exposure to the written word. Staff have been encouraged to improve their skills by attending a Glasgow City Council MLPS course or masterclass training. For those with no training, the school has identified staff to mentor and support them in their use of French for everyday use in the classroom.

A working party is making resources to ensure all classes will have a calendar and weather charts in French in future, to encourage the use of French every day. This group is making small recordings, both oral and visual, of vocabulary for staff to

access for further support. The visiting Spanish teacher is also making audio and video recordings for staff. A working group is writing up physical education lessons in French and Spanish for an App.

Displays around the school make use of different languages and there is a small display of work written in the mother tongue of children with EAL. The school has a small selection of dual language picture books and they have invited in parents who speak those languages to read these stories to the children.

Children's experiences and achievements

The school feels that children have responded very positively to the programme. Some have commented that 'once you know you can learn one language, you are confident about learning another'. Some children like the fact that there is not currently the same emphasis on reading and writing. Children are quick to point out similarities in vocabulary between the modern language and English.

The school feels that children's cultural awareness has improved, partly through the language work and partly through the two Comenius projects the school has been involved in. The school also celebrates the customs of the EAL families and feels that children are more accepting of differences.

Support for learners

All children now learn at least one language. Next session will see children at P4 truly experience 1+2, when they learn French and Spanish. Spanish and Italian visitors to the school have supported children's learning and children are eager to show off what they have learned. The school believes that, by taking their time and embedding languages in the curriculum, they have developed a sustainable and manageable programme.

Successes of the pilot (from the self-evaluation)

- Children have responded very positively to the programme.
- The school feels that they have developed an approach that can be maintained and extended. There has been an increase in staff skills and with so many more trained in MLPS, through pilot funding, the headteacher feels they will be able to continue to increase their involvement in languages.
- One of the main positives was the 'give it a go' attitude from staff, parents and children. Parents spoke to Select Committee representatives and expressed their support for the programme.

Issues arising (from the self-evaluation)

The school feels that growing the programme gradually has been important. Had the headteacher tried to introduce both languages throughout all at once, she feels the programme would have collapsed.

Parents have been very supportive. To maintain this, the school would like to include parents more in the language sessions and hopes to hold some workshops so that parents can work with their children.

Overall evaluation by Education Scotland based on evidence during the visit

The school has chosen to make international education a focus for uniting the school, following the merger of four separate schools. There is evidence of this focus around the school, through visual displays and book displays for example. Through Comenius, the school has introduced knowledge of the cultures of Greece, Poland, Italy and Spain. In addition, the school has a number of children with English as an additional language and has involved native speakers of Arabic and Polish in storytelling. Spanish is introduced in the nursery and, at the request of parents, has been continued into P1. Again at the request of parents, Spanish is continuing into P3 and P4. Children are very aware of other cultures and of the fact that people speak different languages. They benefit from a range of visitors and native speakers, including an Italian assistant. They are developing an awareness of Scotland as part of a wider international community.

In class, children engaged very well with the language tasks set and took part in language games with enthusiasm. They enjoyed a good variety of activities. They worked very well together in whole-class work and group work. Children enjoyed their learning although those at the early stages would benefit from shorter episodes of input, with more opportunities to practise together. At all stages, children benefit from good relationships with staff. Teachers teach the language with enthusiasm and this helps children engage with their learning. There was good use of repetition to practise new language and children were confident in talking in the modern language. At the upper stages, children were using all four skills in class activities. For example, children at P5 consolidated their knowledge of numbers and the alphabet through a range of group activities using the different skills. There is scope to introduce this practice in an age appropriate way further down the school.

The school is using a local pack of materials for modern language learning. Children were made aware of the bigger picture through teachers' use of learning intentions and through clear links to the Es and Os in teachers' planning. In one class, a helpful display of 'I can' sentences reminded children what they had learned to say and do. A good number of traditional themes are introduced, such as colours, weather and places in the town. Teachers plan for progression in terms of content and the key skills. There is scope to make progress in these skills more explicit to children to help the latter recognise their use of literacy skills such as decoding.

The school uses a range of resources in addition to the programme, such as resources for the interactive whiteboard. They are producing an App for physical education which will help staff consolidate listening skills through instructions in the modern language. Through such activities, the school is beginning to integrate the language into the wider curriculum. Next steps would be to branch out from their programme, and make links with other areas being studied in class. For example, work on healthy eating could link to the study of food and stories such as 'The Hungry Caterpillar', in the modern language.

The school already has a link with a school in Spain and is keen to set up a link with a school in France. This would further encourage relevant language learning.

Smaller episodes of learning and greater integration of language learning will be essential if the school is to introduce two languages throughout P1 to P7 and ensure sufficient time for other curricular areas. Overall, staff feel confident following training from the council and are keen to offer greater integration.

Children are supported in their learning by the range of activities on offer and by continuous support from their teacher. Activities move at a brisk pace although at times, children could cope with more language content. As the school introduces language learning from P1 to P7, there will be a need for more differentiated learning, including greater challenge for some children. Staff are enthusiastic and committed to making language learning a success.

The school is addressing progression in terms of vocabulary, the four skills and knowledge of grammar. This is helping children develop a sense of the structure of the language and move from words to sentences, both in terms of receptive and productive skills. Staff are recording children's progress through the four skills with reference to groupings of the Es and Os, using a traffic light system. The school has made a very good start to the process of tracking children's progress which will become increasingly important as they develop their language skills from P1. It will be important for staff to discuss together the standard required for second level for example, to ensure consistency in evaluating progress. The school is aware that it could have closer language links with the secondary schools and staff are considering moves such as a transition project in the modern language.

Children listen very well and have a good understanding of language at both word and sentence level across the school. Children at P7 coped very well with a longer piece of listening on personal information which included unknown vocabulary. They spoke well about themselves, using simple personal language and were able to make up new sentences, with prompting, based on vocabulary they knew from a different context. Commendably, teachers are encouraging children to answer in sentences in class. Children were able to work out the key messages from a longer piece of text involving unknown vocabulary, with support from each other. They are keen to start reading books in the modern language. They can write simple sentences with support but would benefit from more opportunities to engage in writing. This might include short email links with a school in France in future for example. There will be a need to devote more time to reading and writing, including further down the school, to ensure most children have the opportunity to reach second level in all four skills by the end of P7. The school should ensure that displays for the early stages include the language as well as the cultural aspects of the country to ensure that children are exposed to the written word naturally at these stages.

Children have developed confidence in using another language and are very keen to learn more. They do not find it confusing to learn more languages and indeed are seeing the links between French and Spanish. There is a genuine atmosphere of excitement about learning languages which is a result of the positive school ethos around languages and global citizenship, supported by an enthusiastic headteacher and staff. The school is well placed to develop languages further.

