

Introduction

Authority:	Renfrewshire Council
Case Study Focus:	L3
Establishments:	Renfrew High School, Renfrew
Learners' stage/s:	S1 - S6

About the educational establishment and the learners



Renfrew High School is a six-year, non-denominational comprehensive school which serves the burgh of Renfrew. It is situated on the south side of the River Clyde several miles to the west of Glasgow. Its associated primaries are Arkleston Primary School, Kirklandneuk Primary School and Newmains Primary School. The school was opened in 1975 and has a capacity of 1287. The roll is currently 758 and is expected to remain stable for the next few years, though this may change with the completion of new housing in the area. The school building was refurbished between 2008-2010.

Background

Aims of the language learning approach

The department's vision is that all learners will have the opportunity to experience two languages in the broad general education. These will be taught in enough depth to support learners to achieve success in the senior phase should they wish to do so. Colleagues in primary and secondary schools are working together to ensure that prior learning is recognised and that children and young people have the opportunity to develop their skills in French and Spanish through their primary and secondary education.

Progressing towards 1 + 2 : A cluster approach

At Renfrew High School, all learners study French as L2 throughout the broad general education, as this is the language they learn in all three associated primary schools. To date, considerable progress has been made in the primary schools to embed French from P1 to P7. The schools have decided as a cluster to teach Spanish as L3 in P5, 6 and 7 and the secondary school can also offer opportunities to learn Spanish during the broad general education and beyond.

In order to extend the provision of languages in the BGE, learners are also given the opportunity to study Spanish in S3 through an elective. This is in addition to the full allocation of time for L2 and builds on their experience in primary school. Learners study Spanish for two periods per week as part of a 12 week rotation programme, which includes Introduction to Sign Language and Gaming Design amongst other things. The Spanish elective focuses on the context of employability at the end of which learners achieve the SQA Languages for Work Purposes unit at SCQF level 4. Steps are taken to ensure that learners develop all four skills in Spanish and that the language learning goes beyond word level.

Additionally, there are flexible pathways into the senior phase for young people at Renfrew High School. They can choose to study for a variety of different qualifications in French, including the SQA Languages for Work Purposes unit at SCQF levels 4 and 5; National 4 and 5; Higher and Advanced Higher.

Learning and Teaching: the 1+ 2 experience

The Principal Teacher has been in post since October 2015 and has taken steps to ensure effective transition by meeting with primary colleagues to discuss the implementation of the 1+2 policy and to share approaches to language learning and teaching. Continuity and progression are felt to be important principles that reinforce language study for all throughout the broad general education. This provides a solid foundation for learners to pursue language learning in the senior phase to achieve SQA accreditation.

Partnership Working

Teachers are enthusiastic about languages and committed to providing a range of engaging learning experiences. Young people are given a wealth of opportunities to participate actively in their learning, not only in the classroom but also in a wider context. For example, links have been developed between modern languages and other departments across the school such as Home Economics where learners can use their language skills to learn about French food and discover French recipes. Additionally, a wide range of interesting and motivating activities have been developed in partnership with universities and employers in order to ensure that language learning is meaningful and relevant.

For example, learners are given the opportunity to participate in the Word Wizard competition organised by SCILT. The Principal Teacher has commented on how this has not only increased motivation, but has also allowed learners to retain vocabulary much more effectively. Further information on this can be found on the [Word Wizard](#) page of the SCILT website.

Learners also take part in the Multilingual Debate organised by HeriotWatt University. Further information can be found on the university's [Multilingual Debate](#) webpage.

As part of the department's strategy for effecting positive uptake in the senior phase, young people in S3 attended the Business Brunch at the University of the West of Scotland in Paisley. This had a positive impact on their perception of languages and their validity in the world of work. Find out more about these events on the [Business Brunches](#) page of the SCILT website.

International links are also important to the department. In addition to organising visits to Paris, teachers have developed a link with a school in France and young people regularly correspond with their French counterparts via an on-line blog.

Impact

At Renfrew High School, there is a high uptake for languages in the senior phase. Learners comment positively on their learning experiences and readily testify to the benefits of studying languages which teachers make explicit to them. Almost two thirds of all learners continue to study languages into the senior phase with a significant increase in the number of learners opting to study Advanced Higher in session 2016/17.

The way forward

Challenges

The principal teacher recognises that earlier engagement with languages in primary school will have implications for the learning and teaching of L2 in the secondary school. Children and young people will become more confident and increasingly successful learners of languages. Thus, sustaining progressive programmes of study throughout the BGE and into the senior phase will be a challenge for the modern languages department.

The department also recognises that it is important to find time to plan, discuss and support primary colleagues in delivering L3 in the cluster.

Next Steps

Colleagues across the cluster will continue to work closely to ensure continuity and progression.

Presently, L3 in Renfrew High School is offered on an optional, elective basis and although uptake has been healthy, the department is now considering ways of ensuring that all learners experience their full entitlement to L3 at some point in the broad general education. It is intended that this L3 experience will be of sufficient depth to allow learners to acquire the four language learning skills that will support them should they wish to continue the language in the senior phase.

The department is keen to set up a business link with a local company. This is in the initial stages and discussion is on-going with Visit Scotland. Initial ideas include promoting Glasgow Airport to foreign visitors. It is hoped that the department will begin working on this initiative early in session 2016/17.