

## Introduction

<b>Authority:</b>	<b>Glasgow City Council</b>
<b>Case Study Focus:</b>	<b>1+2</b>
<b>Establishment:</b>	<b>Springburn Nursery in partnership with the Goethe-Institut</b>
<b>Learners' Stage:</b>	<b>Early years (age 3-5)</b>



## About the School



Springburn Nursery School is located in the north of Glasgow and children attending the school come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. It has 30 places in both morning and afternoon sessions, 8 being full-time. The school is part of the Springburn Learning Community and the associated primary is Elmvale Primary.

The establishment is led by Jean Waters, Head Teacher, with Shona McPherson the Child Development Team Leader and two other Child Development Officers. In the curriculum section of the school's handbook it is stated: 'Our Aim: To provide high quality learning and teaching experiences based on active learning to enable all children to realise their potential.' (Springburn Nursery School Handbook 2012-2013, p.12) and goes on to say that: 'Whilst your child is at nursery school we aim to give him/her the opportunity to experience as many new learning experiences as possible.' (ibid)

## Background

### Progressing towards 1+2 Approach

'Language learning is life enhancing. It opens the doors to possibilities and experiences which are not available to those who are restricted to the knowledge of one language. Learning an additional language also facilitates a deeper understanding of the possibilities of language and of communication, including those relating to the learner's mother tongue.' (Scottish Government, 2012, p.6)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Scottish Government (2012) [Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 Approach](#). Edinburgh: Scottish Government

Indeed, there is an international research base indicating that very young children learn a new language with enthusiasm and are able to develop a degree of communicative competence and language awareness. The recent *Lessons from Abroad Research Report* (Tinsley & Comfort, 2012)<sup>2</sup> is a wide ranging and comprehensive study which took into account examples of research, policy and practice in early language learning from Europe, Asia, America and Australia. One of their conclusions was that their analysis indicated:

Starting early allows for more time for language learning overall and a sustained experience with the potential to lead to higher levels of proficiency at the end of secondary school. Children learn and practise skills and strategies which transfer across languages and this has a positive influence on literacy in the mother tongue. Children also learn about language in general and this enables them to step back from their own language and become more conscious and deliberate in expressing ideas. (Tinsley & Comfort, 2012: 78)<sup>2</sup>

These arguments also support the Scottish Government's 1+2 language policy. With this in mind, the Goethe-Institut– the German cultural organisation based in Glasgow – developed a sustainable German language programme for the very early stages of learning in nursery education.

In the summer term of 2012, Springburn Nursery School piloted the 'German in the Nursery School' resource. Prior to this pilot, though there had been no formal language teaching before, the children did experience other cultures through celebrating festivals such as Chinese New Year and Divaili.

Access the [Goethe-Institut website](#)

### **Aims of language learning approach**

Jean Waters says that the aims of the project for the school was: 'To introduce the concept of another language to the children and to make them more globally aware by learning about the culture of another country.'

For the Goethe-Institut, the four stated aims for the pilot were:

- To introduce children to aspects of German culture
- To focus on developing listening and speaking skills
- To raise language awareness

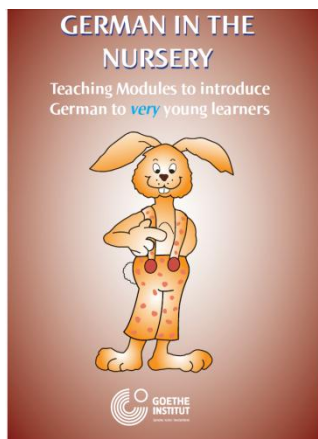
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<sup>2</sup> Tinsley, T. & Comfort, T. (2012) [Lessons from Abroad: International Review of Primary Languages Research Report](#). Reading: CfBT Education Trust

## Planning

The 'German in the Nursery School' booklet is very comprehensive. It contains general comments on background, rationale and methodology as well as detailed lesson plans, worksheets, teachers' notes. Incorporating and adapting the suggestions into the Nursery's own planning was straightforward as the resources are well suited to the needs of younger learners.

## Implementation



In June 2012, an Agreement was signed between the Head-teacher of Springburn Nursery and the Goethe-Institut Glasgow to provide 'Teaching sessions for nursery pupils' and 'a training programme with nursery staff to enable a long term Modern Languages provision in this pre-school establishment' over a period of four months.

Circle Time has provided the opportunity to try activities in smaller groups with Key Workers.

These regular activities include a welcome and goodbye song, times when Hans brings special German items to share, action rhymes, introducing/practising new vocabulary using real objects, photographs or flashcards. Kinaesthetic activities such as these, give children the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding through movement and actions.

**View the film clip showing a group of Springburn children engage with Birgit Hoffmann from the Goethe-Institut for the first time - <http://youtu.be/L1jp-4T8Uoc>**

The box of materials supplied alongside the teaching booklet includes the Hans Hase puppet, as well as CDs, games and other resources to back up lessons and provide further stimulus for follow-up activities.

**Watch how the children gain confidence and are able to demonstrate their understanding as they encounter vocabulary about the body in different activities - <http://youtu.be/HJoqVnhkA2o>**

Importantly, a moodle virtual learning platform was also established. As Birgit only visited the school once a fortnight, the moodle platform allowed nursery staff to access a whole range of interactive and remote support. Resources for staff to support their own language development as well as activities that could be used with the children are available on the secure site.

**[View pictures of the moodle platform](#)**

## Impact

‘I was apprehensive about how the children would respond, however they participated really well and performed two German songs at the Christmas concert. The parents were very impressed and some told us the children were using the German words at home.’ Shona McPherson CDO Team Leader.

Evaluations of the project by teachers, pupils and parents indicated that they saw it as not only enjoyable and educational but, importantly, sustainable.

## Lifelong language learners

‘This programme is an excellent way of introducing young children to a modern language through practical and fun activities, laying the foundations for future learning.’ Jean Waters, Head Teacher.

Read the recent article in [Times Educational Supplement Scotland](#) detailing the project.

## Partnership Working

The project has been a highly successful partnership between Glasgow City Council, the Goethe-Institut and Springburn Nursery School.

‘This was a very successful collaborative project.’ said Jean Waters, ‘The resources and activities provided by the Goethe-Institut were very appropriate for our children and the staff member received very good CPD.’

The end of the pilot was marked by a concert featuring Martina Schwarz, a UK based German singer-songwriter- teacher and language learners of all ages from the Springburn Learning Community.

Learn more about [Martina’s musical approach](#)

‘The concert was great on a variety of levels ... the children participated well and it was a real community event.’ Jean Waters.

Lilo Börgmann, Head of Teachers’ Services at the Goethe-Institut was delighted at the turnout. ‘It was a real learning community event and a true highlight of our endeavours to integrate language and culture into the early learning curriculum. It was also great fun and we were all very impressed with the language skills the young linguists demonstrated.’

## Parental Feedback

The response to the initiative from parents and carers has been positive as Shona McPherson, CDO Team Leader explains: ‘The parents were very impressed and some told us the children were using the German words.’

‘He really enjoyed it and I was amazed at how easily he picked it up.’ Lennon’s Mum.

‘My daughter came home talking some German words and taught them to us.’ Carla’s Mum.

## Challenges and Next Steps

### Challenges

The partners involved in the project identified different challenges. From the school’s point of view, the issue was one of equality of opportunity for all their children. Jean Waters explained:

‘We have morning and afternoon children and the Goethe-Institut could only provide input for the morning children.’

Timetabling opportunities for professional dialogue proved a minor challenge for Birgit Hoffmann, the tutor from the Goethe-Institut, and coincidentally a Springburn parent. Originally the plan was for Birgit to work with the children, with Shona in attendance. Following this input time was set aside for Birgit and Shona to meet to discuss how Shona might take the learning forward in the fortnight until Birgit’s next visit. Unfortunately, often real life and the demands of a busy nursery intervened curtailing the CPD sessions. However, Shona was always confident enough in the language and the pedagogy to continue despite this minor inconvenience.

### Next Steps

Jean Waters has a clear vision of the future at Springburn Nursery School. She says as far as German is concerned she would like ‘to provide these experiences for next year’s children within the nursery programmes and continue to provide CPD training for the staff member to develop her skills and confidence. We would be available to support other nurseries who become involved in this project.’

The Goethe-Institut sees a number of ways forward.

- To offer training modules for more nursery staff in Glasgow
- Extend the moodle virtual learning platform
- Present the project to other LAs with the aim of widening uptake to other parts of the country