

## **Evaluation visit to Langlands Primary School, Angus**

**Title of the project:** Introducing French to all children from P1-P5

### **Aims of the project:**

The aim of the pilot was to introduce French to all children from P1 – P5 by embedding the language into the daily routine.

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

### **Background**

Langlands is a double-streamed school with a roll of 427 at the time of the visit and a resource base for children with autism and complex and multiple needs. There are 14 classes and 17 FTE class teachers, as well as the senior management team and the support for learning team. There are two teachers trained for MLPS German, one of whom is the acting deputy headteacher and one teacher trained for French who is the acting headteacher. One of the P7 class teachers is undergoing training in French. Two teachers took part in a French immersion course in the summer but one of them has since left.

### **Resources/methodology**

The pilot was introduced to staff through a half day training session with Le Français en Ecosse (LFEE). The staff then had a further three twilight sessions and two half days of training as well as LFEE staff working alongside class teachers. Planning blocks were devised for teachers by LFEE working with SCILT. German was introduced to children at P5 last year as L3. This year, a foreign language assistant has just started to introduce German to children at P5.

Staff have been trying to embed French within the curriculum and through their daily routines. The language is not taught discretely, except at the upper stages. French has been integrated into the daily routine such as through taking registration, recording school dinners, the distribution of fruit, noting the weather and date, and for basic instructions. In some classes, groups have been labelled with French colours. Some teachers are now trying to integrate French into their topic work. For example, French has been used for some aspects of the Mary Queen of Scots theme, with support from LFEE.

### **Children's experiences and achievements**

Children are enthusiastic and enjoy trying to speak French. They enjoy listening to the language and are retaining a lot of the basic vocabulary. During the pilot, the focus has been on the spoken word, but some of the younger children are now being encouraged to read some basic words. The older children are being encouraged to read and write sentences. Some of the children at P7 have written and presented a weather report at assembly. The children who were in P5 last year learned about some aspects of German culture and participated in a German quiz which was delivered by some young people from the secondary school. More work has to be done on the culture of both countries, especially with the younger children.

### **Support for learners**

Learners have been supported through repetition, praise and encouragement and through the use of ICT resources, film and sound clips. An active approach has been used to ensure enjoyment and challenge. Some classrooms have displays of basic words for pupils to refer to and visual prompts are used to encourage the children to use the language where possible.

### **Successes of the pilot (from the self-evaluation)**

Staff feel that children are motivated and keen to participate. Most of the children are gaining confidence and are able to pronounce basic vocabulary correctly. Children's learning is starting at an earlier age and the school expects they will be more confident and competent by P7 in future. Staff feel highly positive about the resources and CLPL sessions.

### **Issues arising (from the self-evaluation)**

The school feels the pilot has achieved the initial aim of introducing another language to all children from P1 onwards. French is starting to become embedded within the curriculum, but further work is needed. Staff need more opportunities to learn the language. Teachers need to be more confident, especially with pronunciation, if delivery of the language is to become more routine. A model for future support needs to be carefully thought through in order to sustain the delivery of another language.

The school management team intends to place a greater focus on the monitoring and regular evaluation of the delivery of French. They would like to introduce French to the nursery as a matter of course.

A change of staff has resulted in a setback with the pilot. The school has had a lot of new staff this year who did not have any French and had missed a lot of the training. However, the school feels they now have a basis on which to build. Staff and children are enthusiastic and have enjoyed learning French. The overall impact has been good. There is a feeling of everyone learning together.

## **Overall evaluation by Education Scotland based on evidence during the visit**

The pilot has achieved its initial aim of introducing all children to French, from P1 to P7, including the traditional MLPS work at P6/P7. The pilot began late in the first year so carried on into the next session. This brought with it the difficulty of new staff who had missed the start of the pilot. It is to the school's credit that all staff have embraced the work of the pilot. The school has also begun to introduce German as L3, with support.

The children and staff spoken to during the visit were very enthusiastic about teaching and learning French. Teachers were very open in telling the children that they were learning too and that they would check on anything they did not know. They had felt anxious about the pilot initially but they felt that the resources from the

pilot, along with the support which was readily available for any questions, had been invaluable. They particularly liked the sound files as they were very aware of the importance of correct pronunciation. They were becoming more confident.

They had noted that children with English as an additional language had adapted well to the learning of another language and were building literacy skills through the French activities. They felt that learning another language was also having a positive impact on children's social skills.

Children were very keen to show what they had learned and children at P1-P3 displayed their learning confidently to family and friends at assembly, through singing songs in French. Children at P7 practised their presentation skills by sharing their learning with their peers at assembly through a powerpoint display.

During class visits, teachers made good use of games and songs to help children practise pronunciation and consolidate vocabulary. Learning took place mainly through whole-class activities but children responded very well to group and paired tasks when given the opportunity to do so. For example, children at P3 used different skills in groups to practise characteristics and personal information. There is scope to do more of such work and avoid spending too long on whole-class tasks. Children were being introduced to the use of a bilingual dictionary in order to make them more independent in their learning.

There are examples of teachers bringing language learning into the curriculum such as the display of the story of Joseph's multi-coloured coat which includes the colours in French as well as in English. In some classes, displays on the classroom walls include a section on learning in the modern language and this helps keep the focus on French as part of the curriculum. It is helpful to use 'I can' statements for progress in French where these are used for other areas of the curriculum.

The prescriptive planning used to start the pilot has been helpful in supporting teachers to introduce the language and in enabling them to support each other. As children make progress, it will be important to ensure there is sufficient challenge and that children continue to build on their knowledge of structures and develop in all four skills. The school is aware of this and has set up a working group to prepare planning sheets for teachers, based on core experiences and success criteria. All planning should ensure a focus on progression in all four skills. This can be usefully linked to children's literacy skills so that they are more aware of their own progress. The school is keen to link in to work in the rest of the curriculum to make the French work more relevant to children. For example, their work on families included finding out about French celebrities. There is scope to extend this approach and, for example, use pets vocabulary to lead into work on zoos and endangered species, or work on food to link in with a healthy eating theme.

Initially, the focus has been on oral and aural work. However, at P2, children were recognising written questions about themselves. At the upper stages, there was evidence of some more challenging reading, for example around the theme of Mary Queen of Scots or reading *The Hungry Caterpillar* in French. At these stages, children were being supported to write in sentences.

Children at P7 were able to give information about themselves in French and could understand personal information spoken in French which contained words they did not know. They worked well together to work out the meaning of a text about a family which contained a number of unknown words. However, they are not fully aware of the strategies they can use to work out unknown words.

As all children are introduced to French from P1 in future, it will be important to have a progressive course which addresses progression in these core skills. Simple approaches such as providing word banks and jotters for French will also help children see what they have learned.

The school's working group is looking to address the issue of progression. They hope to indicate which resources will be suitable for the different stages of a P1-P7 programme to ensure appropriate challenge. They will be assisted in this by the P1 to P7 framework which will be published by Education Scotland in June. The school is also aware that it would be helpful to integrate learning about French culture into the curriculum.

Staff are keen to have more training, especially if they are to give children the opportunity to achieve at second level in all four skills by the end of P7. They have enjoyed the challenge of the pilot and want to continue to build on it. They are aware that in doing so, they have the support of parents and children. Parents have commented very positively on the pilot. Children enjoy it and want to learn more languages in future.