

LANGUAGE LEARNING IN SCOTLAND A 1+2 APPROACH

1+2 pilot projects: key messages and next steps

The pilot programme for the '1+2 report' as it has come to be known, began in June 2012 with an initial identification of possible pilot schools. Resources, planning and training implications were identified for each of the ten pilots. As a result, the first of six primary pilots began in November 2012. The remaining pilots, including a transition project involving a secondary school and two primary schools, began over the course of 2013. In the case of the three secondary school pilots, planning took place over session 2012-13 and the pilots began with the new session 2013-14. The evaluation visits took place from June 2013 and continued until April 2014. These evaluations indicate interim progress with the original aims of the projects. Work is ongoing in the pilot schools.

The individual evaluations of the pilot schools give details on the successes and challenges of each project. In the secondary sector, almost all of the young people involved are to be presented for an SQA award this session and results will be one measure of success.

In almost all of the primary projects, the aim was to introduce children to a new language. In most cases, the evaluation visit took place less than one year after the start of the project. In most cases, the introduction of ongoing assessment of the four skills of listening, talking, reading and writing was a recommendation for the continuing development of language learning. Nevertheless, promising progress has been identified in all cases, particularly in listening and talking.

Some key messages have emerged for schools, local authorities and national bodies. These will inform the next steps of the Scottish Government, Education Scotland and SCILT as they continue to support languages development in Scotland.

Primary school pilots

The pilot programme focused mainly on the primary sector, given the recommendation to deliver an additional language from P1 to P7 by 2020.

Learners' experiences and attitudes to learning

Overall, children in the pilot schools were very positive about language learning. They were confident and enjoyed speaking in another language. They had adapted naturally to using the language in activities which engaged and stimulated them, particularly at the early stages.

They were proud of what they had learned and of the fact that they understood when class instructions were given in the target language. Importantly, they were keen to learn more languages in the future. Where the school had introduced them to more than one language, they rose to the challenge. Many could see similarities between

European languages. Most were developing strategies for learning such as using the context to work out the meaning of unknown words. They demonstrated openness to other cultures and enjoyed comparing these to their own culture.

Good pedagogy engages children and teaching a new language is no different in this respect. Where the aims were clear, where children were actively engaged in language lessons and experienced a good variety of tasks involving whole class activities and working with others, they enjoyed their learning. It was clear that, given appropriate methodologies and the right level of challenge, all children can enjoy and benefit from language learning.

Views of parents

The parents involved in the evaluation visits were very supportive of their children starting language learning early. Many found that their children were practising the language at home and accessing the internet to find out more information about the country where it is spoken.

Curriculum, pedagogy and progression

One key recommendation of the '1+2 report' is that language learning should be integrated into the life and work of the school where possible. The pilot schools have embedded use of the additional language into classroom routines and assemblies for example. In addition, they have made links with other areas of the curriculum and have helped children consolidate their language learning in other subject areas. In one school for example, the language was reinforced during warm-up activities in physical education lessons. In another, language work was consolidated through numeracy activities at the early stages. These strategies have raised the profile of language learning in the schools involved and helped children view languages as a real part of school life.

Teachers have used traditional themes for language learning such as dates and weather but have also begun to use the language to explore their own culture and that of countries where the language is spoken. Understandably, the use of relevant, up-to-date and interactive materials, from puppets to interactive whiteboard activities, has had a positive impact on children's motivation for learning.

There is a growing awareness that language learning in the primary school is about more than vocabulary. One of the pilot schools referred to progression as being more than 'just learning more words'. This is a key message. The move from learning words to building skills in language learning has been supported by the use of relevant and challenging contexts for learning such as local folklore, francophone countries or environmental issues.

Overall, children displayed good listening skills and confidence in talking, with good or very good pronunciation. Beginners were learning to decode the written word and had begun to write words in the modern language. Almost all children were learning strategies for language learning and had developed positive and open attitudes towards learning more languages in the future.

Where staff underwent some initial training and then introduced an additional language to the whole of P1 to P5 at once, teachers were given a prescriptive course outline to support them in their delivery and to enable them to support each other. This proved very successful in building teacher confidence. They introduced the language using mainly oral/aural work initially, making good use of songs and games, but introduced children to the written word early on. As their confidence grew, they began to look at ways of introducing the language into other areas of learning suited to their own context.

Almost all teachers have made clear and helpful links to children's literacy skills such as presenting information and listening purposefully. Children have learned to use the same decoding skills as those used in English language work to find out the meaning of a text in the target language. By developing these strategies, children are building on their generic literacy skills and developing strategies for learning other languages in future.

Staff development

Understandably, teachers who had not undergone any language training previously were anxious at the start of their pilot. However, with training, their confidence grew as the pilot progressed and as they saw positive reactions from the children. Staff teaching children at P6/P7 were generally staff who had been doing so previously and were already trained in delivering another language. They were able to support their colleagues.

Staff were very honest with children. They did not try to say that they were experts in the language. Rather, they explained they were continuing to learn with the children and modelled a positive attitude to acquiring new knowledge. They made very good use of sound files to help children learn good pronunciation from the outset.

The teachers are to be commended for their professionalism and their willingness to devote a substantial amount of time to preparing for language work. This has been crucial to the success of the pilots.

Next steps

The pilot programme was set up to show what is possible, to show where more resources and support are needed and to show where improvements could be made. The following points have become clear.

Training

- If teachers are to deliver an additional language from P1 and embed it into the life of the school, they require adequate and ongoing training. The 1+2 approach hinges on staff confidence in using the language and on their enthusiasm for language learning. Training is essential in instilling that confidence.
- Teachers want to integrate the language and link it to other areas of the curriculum. However, they need support to do so and to provide more in-depth learning for children. This will ensure children have the opportunity to

achieve second level in all four skills by the end of P7. Teachers would welcome support in terms of additional training and visiting specialists such as students, secondary teachers or native speakers. This would develop language learning in children and in the teachers themselves.

Resources and progression

- Teachers would like a progressive framework for language learning, P1 to P7. This would include the basic vocabulary, grammar and structures to be addressed on the way to second level. They would like further guidance on how to teach knowledge of language in an appropriate way.
- Teachers would like more resources, particularly for the early stages and more advice on suitable resources for the different stages of primary education. They see the inclusion of sound files as particularly important.
- Teachers recognise the importance of teaching all four skills of listening, talking, reading and writing, albeit with a greater focus on listening and talking at the early stages. There is scope to offer children greater challenge in reading and writing tasks. Generally, children react very well to such challenge.
- Initially, children across the stages in the pilot schools were all learning something new together. However, the change in approach and the introduction of another language from P1 means that greater differentiation will be required as children continue to make progress in their learning.

Assessment of progress

- Schools have based their planning on the Es and Os at second level but there is scope to make learning outcomes more explicit to children so that they know what they are trying to achieve in the four skills and can see the progress they are making.
- As with all areas of the curriculum, teachers need to build assessment into their planning. Teachers need clear guidance on what progress in the four skills will look like as children go through the early stages. Progress should be assessed using naturally occurring evidence in the main. Some good examples are emerging but this is a work in progress.

Introducing a second additional language

- Authorities are aware that it is not reasonable to expect teachers who are just beginning to train in delivering one additional language to deliver a second at the same time. Further training will be required. Currently, many teachers are getting used to integrating one additional language across the stages and to developing their own language skills. Where this has just begun, this should be the priority.
- Flexible ways of introducing a second additional language can be found, through support from native speakers or trained visitors, or sharing resources within clusters for example.
- Introducing a second modern language through project work cannot be expected to achieve the same depth in the language. It is still possible to move from word level to basic sentences however, to develop an understanding of how language works and to build on language learning skills and literacy skills. Staff would like more examples of how to do this.

Transition

- Curricular links between the secondary school and its associated primary schools are important in any subject and have become increasingly important for additional language learning. Clusters must work together to decide which languages will be studied. Secondary departments must know what has been delivered and how. Assessment information should be shared. In best practice, secondary school language departments will have regular contact with the associated primary schools.

Some senior managers have expressed concern over having sufficient time to devote to language learning and over maintaining sufficient numbers of trained staff. It will be important for school management teams and local authorities to work together to address these concerns. The *1+2 report* asks local authorities to undertake an audit of current provision in their authority and to prepare a strategy for implementation of the recommendations. Local authorities should work with schools to address core issues of staffing, support and training.

Secondary school pilots

The three secondary pilot schools focused on ways of introducing a second additional language. One school did so at S3, one at S4 and one at S5/S6. Details of these pilots are contained in the individual evaluations. At this moment, it is too soon to know how many of the young people involved will have been successful in achieving accreditation for their work, where that was possible. However, all have enjoyed and benefited from a worthwhile experience and have learned new skills.

Implications for the curriculum

In all cases, the schools wish to continue to offer the provision introduced through the pilot programme next session, although not necessarily in the same format. At least one school plans to expand provision in this area. The new Languages for Life and Work award has proved a popular way of expanding provision during the broad general education and beyond.

Languages for all

The pilots have demonstrated that all young people can benefit from learning a modern language and can achieve. With appropriate differentiation and classroom activities, languages are accessible to all, including young people with additional support needs. The flexibility of the new qualifications gives schools more scope to meet the needs of all and expand young people's horizons by introducing them to different cultures and different ways of communicating.

Motivating and relevant learning

The pilots have confirmed that young people enjoy language learning when the experience in the classroom is engaging and relevant to their lives. Young people in the pilot schools could see a purpose in language learning where it was clearly linked to the real world and relevant to future employment or leisure opportunities. They were motivated by trips to places where the language is spoken for work or

leisure, by relevant resources, by contact with native speakers and by links with young people in the country where the language is spoken. Linking work to the local context brought home the relevance of language learning for employment. Indeed, business links have proven motivational for young people in the pilot schools and beyond.

Challenge and progression

There is more flexibility in the ways in which the second additional language may be introduced but the work should still be progressive and offer the learner appropriate challenge. High expectations and challenging learning experiences involving all four skills engage young people and give them a sense of achievement. A number of young people in the pilot schools expressed satisfaction that they could understand the language used as the normal means of communication in class and could decipher more demanding texts. This applied to learners at all levels. Even those who found language learning more challenging were able to cope with studying a second additional language and were growing in confidence as a result. In some lessons, there was scope to offer greater challenge. In all lessons, learners showed that they were able to understand and communicate in their 'new' language, in a range of real-life situations.

Whole school support for languages

The pilot schools enjoyed the support of their senior management teams in opening up opportunities in the timetable for additional language learning. Such support is essential in providing opportunities for new languages, new courses and links with other departments where appropriate.

Next steps

The pilot programme was set up to show what is possible, to show where more resources and support are needed and show where improvements could be made. The following points have become clear.

Assessment of progress

- Ongoing assessment which focuses on profiling achievement in the four key skills will help to ensure that young people are constantly challenged to achieve more. Talking should include spontaneous as well as learned utterances.

Age appropriate resources

- When resources are chosen for older pupils, it is important to ensure they reflect the level of maturity of these young people. This was not always the case. It is particularly important when young people are learning a second additional language beyond S1. Materials used for very young beginners are less motivating for older learners and deal with less relevant contexts. Resources should be up-to-date and relevant to young people's interests and futures.
- Business links take time to establish and there is perhaps scope for a consortium at local level to build up a bank of such links in a more coherent way.

Ongoing support

In response to the findings of the pilot programme, Scottish Government, Education Scotland and SCILT, working in partnership, are providing the following support:

- P1 guidance produced in December 2013
- A framework for P1 to P7 available by the end of June 2014. This will be a progressive framework which builds competence in all four skills and knowledge of grammar and structures. It will consider a range of themes but will be flexible enough to respond to the school's own context
- Learning events taking place between March and May 2014 to share the messages of the pilot schools and engage in professional discussion
- Train the Trainers course open to all authorities in June/July 2014 to offer a sustainable way of increasing numbers of trained teachers
- Further advice and guidance planned for the second additional language
- Further interactive resources planned, particularly for the early stages
- Pilot materials to be made available online from May 2014
- Advice to local authorities on preparing a strategy for '1+2'
- Ongoing advice and guidance on the Education Scotland and SCILT websites and from Education Scotland and SCILT teams
- Continuing contact with pilot schools, particularly where a pilot programme had an evaluative visit early on in the project
- Dedicated funding from Scottish Government
- Scottish Government national conferences for the sharing of best practice

An additional pilot has begun in a primary school in South Ayrshire.

Additional guidance on the introduction of the second additional language will focus on the broad general education at both the primary and secondary stages. In addition, there is great scope to develop language learning across the senior phase, through discreet courses or in conjunction with other subjects.

The pilot projects have begun to raise the profile of language learning in schools. They indicate that, with the right support and attitudes in place, we can be optimistic for the future of language learning in Scotland.