

## Curriculum for Excellence: Modern languages Guidance Paper

### Introduction

This paper builds on the messages contained in *Modern languages: principles and practice* which identified three key aims for modern language learning in the context of Curriculum for Excellence. Learning another language has the potential to develop in children and young people the skills required for communicative competence and an understanding of the interconnected nature of languages and of responsible, global citizenship. This paper gives further guidance on what that means in practice.

### Key points

- Language is for **communication**. Learners need to develop the language skills required to communicate with others.
- Language skills should be developed in an **integrated** manner, reflecting their use in real life situations.
- Practitioners and learners should use the **modern language** where possible **for classroom interaction**.
- Learners need to develop a **knowledge of the structure** of the modern language and understand how it relates to their own.
- Practitioners should make use of high quality, **relevant** and challenging resources on a **wide range** of relevant themes.
- Language skills should be developed through a **variety of learning approaches and activities**, in keeping with the principles of curriculum design outlined in *Building the Curriculum 3*. These should include a high proportion of **opportunities for learners to take an active part in their learning**, as well as episodes of direct teaching.
- Lessons should include meaningful use of **ICT** to enhance learning and bring the world of the modern language into the classroom.
- Learners need opportunities to develop **skills for learning, life and work** such as working with others, problem solving and presenting information.
- Studying a modern language raises **awareness of other cultures** through the study of relevant materials in the modern language
- Practitioners should maintain a high level of **challenge** to promote achievement in learning another language **at all levels**. **All** children and young people are entitled to learn another language throughout the broad general education, with appropriate support.

### Significant aspects of learning

- Learners should develop the skills of **talking, listening, reading and writing** to enable them to understand and communicate with others in real life situations.
- They should develop an understanding of how the language works so that they can generate new language.

### Key elements of assessment

- Practitioners need to plan for a **coherent** approach to learning, teaching and assessment. Assessment should be planned at the same time as the learning.
- A range of assessment evidence should be **built up over time** to identify progress. Assessment will be ongoing, and periodical. It will be particularly important at times of transition and practitioners should engage in moderation of their evaluation of progress in the significant aspects of learning. It will include quality evidence across the experiences and outcomes for each of the four skills. This does not mean that each outcome will be formally assessed but rather that a picture of the learner's overall progress in each skill will develop over time.
- The challenge is to provide **breadth and challenge** through learning experiences across the significant aspects of learning and opportunities for the learner to **apply** what he/she has learned in new and unfamiliar contexts.
- In developing a **progressive modern language experience**, practitioners should be mindful of increasing length and complexity of text, length, complexity and accuracy of response in interactions and knowledge of structure. Learners should be able to take the initiative.
- Young people should be involved in assessment of their work, in accordance with the principles of AifL. Self and peer assessment should be encouraged and valued. Through discussion with their teachers, learners should know how well they are developing the four skills and what they need to do next to improve.

### **Transition, P7 to S1**

Regular links and collaborative planning between the secondary school and its associated primaries, including moderation of assessment evidence, will ensure that children continue to progress and be challenged as they move from primary school into secondary education. Modern language learning should be represented in the P7 Profile. Modern language departments should know what, and how, their associated schools teach the modern language and should build on that experience in S1. Primary schools should know how the secondary department builds on their work. Transition projects can be a useful way of valuing children's learning at this time.

### **Progression in learning**

- Learners need a **coherent, progressive** package of learning, from P6 (or earlier) onwards.
- Learners need a range of relevant and motivating activities and contexts in which to develop communicative competence and a greater understanding of other cultures.
- Learners need to move from basic skills such as recall of vocabulary to creating new and more complex language.
- Practitioners should plan for **progression in all four skills and knowledge about language**. They should plan for assessment opportunities which can occur in an ongoing way through classroom activities and for periodic assessment such as formal testing.
- **In reading**, learners need to become accustomed to text of increasing length and more complex language, from a variety of sources. They should develop reading strategies such as scanning for information.

- **Consistent interaction** in the modern language should be part of classroom activity in order to develop learners' skills in understanding increasingly long and unfamiliar language.
- Learners need to engage in regular **conversations**, moving from simple, prepared and familiar language to more spontaneous speech.
- **Writing** should be a regular part of learning activities such as ongoing emails or blogs and will not always be formal pieces of work. Writing can be both fun and challenging, especially with appropriate support.
- In each skill, learners must show, over a period of time, that they are able to **apply** their learning in different contexts. For example, if the learner can give an opinion on food, he/she should be able to give opinions on other themes of interest.

### What should be assessed?

- By planning for **ongoing** assessment opportunities and **periodic testing**, particularly where learners use their skills in an integrated way, we will allow learners to demonstrate, over time, **how much** and **how well** they have learned.
- In **listening**, practitioners may use class activities as informal evidence of the learner's ability to **understand and respond** comfortably in a conversation or role-play. Learners may also be asked to **listen for information** such as key facts from a news bulletin or story, as a class activity.
- In **talking**, practitioners can plan to use the learner's performance in paired or group speaking activities to build up an ongoing picture of the learner's ability to respond in conversations or role-plays. *Some* of these may be recorded for evidence purposes. Learners may also be assessed on presentations given to their peers.
- In **reading**, learners will demonstrate developing skills through planned activities such as searching the internet for information on a project in the modern language, reading from a range of texts for information on events or reading an extract from a novel which fits in with their topic. They may demonstrate their understanding and progress in a range of ways, such as summarising key points or following instructions.
- In **writing**, practitioners may use learners' performance in a range of writing activities in class as ongoing indicators of progress. These could include writing instructions for a game, entering news on a class blog, composing slides for a PowerPoint, or simply writing their opinions on a theme.
- A balance of ongoing and periodic assessment opportunities will require learners to demonstrate a body of learning built up over time and to **apply** their knowledge and skills in different contexts.

### Gathering evidence

- Practitioners should gather a range of **quality** evidence of progression in learning from both ongoing formative assessment opportunities and periodic summative assessment.
- The amount and range of evidence should be sufficient to build up a profile of the learner's achievement in the four key skills but proportionate and manageable. Learners should be involved in the selection of evidence.
- The evidence should show that the learner has understood a **significant body of knowledge**, has responded **consistently well** to challenging

learning experiences and has been able to **apply** what he/she has learned in new and unfamiliar contexts.

- In each skill, the learner does not have to be secure in every outcome at one level in order to move on to the next. When appropriate, the learner should have the opportunity to engage in learning experiences at the next level. Practitioners will plan to give learners experience of all the outcomes but should take a holistic view of achievements across the four skill areas. When learners have had a deep learning experience at one level, they should move on to the next.

### **Quality assurance and moderation**

- Practitioners must ensure that their view of what a learner has achieved is supported by sound evidence. Their evaluation of this evidence must be consistent with the evaluations of colleagues in their own, or another, department or centre.
- Centres should plan together and use their professional judgement in coming to a shared understanding of what it means to achieve a level in each of the four skills. Emerging national guidance will support this process. Moderation is particularly important at times of transition from one level to the next and between P7 and S1.

### **Responsibility of all**

Literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing remain the responsibility of all practitioners. Aspects of all of these, but particularly of literacy, will be a natural part of modern language lessons. Through learning how another language works, children and young people can understand their own language better. Many of the skills required to talk, listen, read and write in a modern language, will mirror the literacy skills being developed in English.

Working together and learning to respect the views of others, for example, are important aspects of health and wellbeing. Learning about another culture will help learners grow in their understanding of global citizenship. Teachers of modern languages should be mindful of opportunities to help children develop those skills which are the responsibility of all, and should make this learning explicit to the learner.

### **Using the table**

The following table is meant simply as a guide for practitioners as they consider the knowledge and skills required to achieve a level. It will help them identify things the learner should be able to do consistently well and in different contexts. It will help centres devise their own success criteria for tasks related to the key skills and develop a holistic picture of the learner's progress.

Practitioners will still have to exercise professional judgement in agreeing on the achievement of levels. The table should help them to ask the right questions of themselves when considering the evidence of learners' progress in whatever context it occurs.

