

Evaluation visit to Paisley Grammar, Ralston Primary School and Gallowhill Primary School, Renfrewshire Council

Title of the project: German recycling transition project

Aims of the project: The project aims to:

- develop learners' engagement and enthusiasm for German by creating motivating activities to support them in learning the language across the P7/S1 transition.
- create a sustainable unit of work which supports learners in transition and enhances their engagement with the language.
- further develop professional links through partnership working across schools.

Discussion of self-evaluation papers: key messages from the schools

Background

Paisley Grammar is a comprehensive school serving the east end of Paisley with a roll of around 950. All pupils at S1 to S3 study French or German, continuing with the language studied in the primary school. Two classes at S1 studied German at the time of the pilot.

Gallowhill Primary School has ten classes, five of which learn German for one hour per week (P4, P4/5, P5/6, P6 and P7) with the visiting German specialist. Two class teachers have completed the Renfrewshire Council four day MLPS training course.

Ralston Primary School has 14 classes. German is taught from P4 to P7.

The two associated primary schools offering German worked together on the content of the lessons. The children learned about recycling in Germany and about the different bins used for rubbish.

Resources/methodology

Staff used technology and cooperative tasks to engage children in this theme. Children experienced opportunities to be creative, to engage actively in their learning and to use ICT to present their findings. At Gallowhill Primary School, there were links to work in social subjects, health and wellbeing and literacy.

Children's experiences and achievements

Staff felt that children engaged positively with many aspects of the project, including making the recycling bins and accessing ICT resources. They have gained confidence through active learning activities.

At the end of the project, most children could name the bins and give some examples of what went in them, in German. They were very interested in the

differences between Germany and Scotland. They were able to label the rubbish and read and match the rubbish for each bin. Children were able to describe, in English, the approaches to recycling used in Germany and came to the view that recycling has a much higher priority there.

They acquired some new vocabulary and had opportunities to use this in making and labelling recycling bins at the primary school and in presenting their findings to their peers through a powerpoint presentation and poster display at secondary school.

The theme has been included in both the primary and the S1 curriculum and will be expanded upon next session. The experience was very different from the usual course delivered at the P7 stage and is a new addition to the S1 programme.

Support for learners

Staff felt that cooperative tasks supported all learners to engage and participate. The use of ICT helped children and young people to learn the vocabulary.

Successes of the pilot (from the self-evaluation)

- Increased communication and collaboration. The primary schools felt they had enjoyed very effective liaison with each other. Staff had opportunities to share practice through professional dialogue.
- The project introduced a sustainable enhancement to the curriculum which will be reviewed and further developed
- Learners engaged positively with many aspects of the project.
- The focus on the project, the visit to the secondary school and the showcase event have raised the profile of the language

Issues arising (from the self-evaluation)

- The timeframe for planning and collaboration was too short. An increase in the number of lessons could have meant a greater variety of activities to support children to learn the new vocabulary and develop their learning skills.
- Assessment of learning should be considered more carefully at the planning stage with clearer aims and outcomes for the project.
- There was insufficient liaison with the secondary school department to fully develop the project.
- A partnership with a German school would be helpful. A lesson could be created on Skype where learners could show the German children the recycling bins they had made and see something the German children had created. There could be clips of how children in Germany recycle.
- The schools could organise a community clear-up of a local park involving pupils from both the primary and secondary schools. Pupils could create a report on the activity with some samples being sent to a local newspaper.
- Children at P7 could put on a display of what they have made for the younger children. This would achieve more impact on the whole school.
- More attention needed to be paid to planning across the sectors with more specialist support.

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

Normally, the secondary school and associated primary schools liaise over curricular matters at cluster meetings. However, the headteachers of the primary schools felt that the pilot was a good opportunity to introduce a different and more relevant topic to the German programme and create closer links with the secondary school. Assessment information on German does not go to the secondary school currently.

All three schools welcomed the opportunity to give modern languages a higher profile. The primary schools were keen to move to more interactive and engaging materials. They welcomed the groupwork task related to recycling. The link with the Goethe Institute produced some welcome resources such as a powerpoint for vocabulary related to recycling but the schools would have welcomed more time to prepare for these. In effect, there was insufficient time for the project to develop fully.

There was considerable input on German culture but the language input was mainly restricted to vocabulary. The primary schools were imaginative in producing wordbanks and in incorporating the production of a recycling bin. However, they would have liked time to prepare more ICT based resources and interactive activities for the whiteboard.

Children and young people had learned a lot about German recycling and this had been of some interest. However, the German they learned was limited to word level. They had learned vocabulary related to recycling and were able to read and write words linked to recycling during activities such as designing posters. Children at P7 used their knowledge to produce a recycling bin and then engaged well in producing a poster on recycling at secondary school. However, these activities required greater challenge, particularly for young people at S1. In future, more time would allow for more reading materials on this theme and a move to writing in sentences.

The primary schools had made good use of twilight sessions to collaborate with each other and these had proved useful for modern languages and for building professional relationships in general. Children at P7 attended a lesson at the secondary school where the principal teacher modern languages checked on children's progress with the project but there were no other meetings between the department and the primary schools. The common link was the primary specialist project lead. However, there was a need for greater communication between the languages department in the secondary school and the primary schools.

At a showcase event in S1, children listened to two of their peers deliver a powerpoint on recycling vocabulary and considered a display of the recycling posters. There was scope to make more use of the target language at this event.

Children, now in S1, understood basic personal information spoken in German. In the past, they had enjoyed reading books, including fairy tales, in German. They could cope with basic questions and were able to give some personal information about themselves. However, they were not confident in speaking German and

wanted more opportunities to speak German in school. They were clear about the topics they would like to study in German, such as music and sport.

The secondary school did not continue the project at the optimum time of transition but has since worked with SCILT to build on the project with a unit on the environment. The languages department will deliver this as an extended theme with more demanding and interactive resources.

The schools have decided that the idea of a transition project, with a longer timescale, a clearer idea of who is leading the project overall and better communication between the languages department and the primary schools, is a worthwhile venture. The work would move from word to sentence level and would involve more reading in German. The potential is there for a very positive experience.

The project has partially completed its aims. The two primary schools have created much closer links and have worked well in collaboration. The project has highlighted the need for close collaboration between the sectors to ensure an effective transition project. Ideally, children would have a say in the choice of project. In addition, the project must go beyond word level in the language. Sufficient time needs to be allowed to enable all of these things to take place.