# Schools supporting
excellence in languages

Introduction

Thirty-four teaching schools and their alliance schools across the country have been working with great commitment and imagination on projects aimed at sharing and developing best practice in the teaching of languages in both primary and secondary schools. The topics which each school or group of schools worked on were chosen by the schools themselves and based on a detailed audit of languages teaching in their own teaching school alliance. Schools also took into account the recommendations of the 2011 Ofsted report *Modern languages: achievement and challenge 2007–2010*. All projects have involved staff working at many different levels across the school(s) including Specialist Leaders of Education (SLEs) and headteachers.

This publication contains examples of the projects across a wide range of themes which are relevant to the effective teaching of languages. The schools involved in the DfE-funded Languages Support Programme[1] are keen to share their learning as widely as possible and hope that you find something in this collection of case studies which might also be of interest to you in your own teaching context. Every case study includes contact details for the school and teachers involved.

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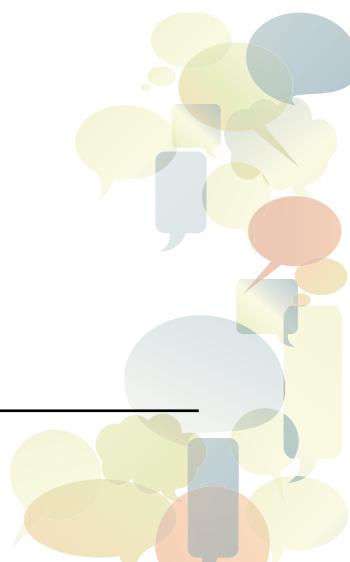
[1] This publication has been produced as part of the Languages Support Programme, funded by the DfE and managed by CfBT Education Trust. The responsibility for content creation and quality assurance lies with the individual teaching school alliance.

Action research

Action research

The Ofsted report on Modern Languages, *Achievement and challenge 2007-2010*, highlighted *'a successful and relentless focus on raising standards in languages'* as a key feature of outstanding provision. The report recommended that secondary schools broaden approaches to teaching and learning, stating that *'good or outstanding departments often encouraged innovation'*. Systematic and cross-departmental approaches, based on *'good use of "student voice" and other types of evidence'* led to improvements in teaching. Ofsted stressed the importance of good professional development, noting that where teachers had few opportunities to update themselves in subject work, teaching was weaker.

Teaching school alliances (TSAs) recognise the importance of evidence in informing action to develop teaching performance and have used action research as an effective way of investigating and achieving improvements. In one TSA, the programme lead's own action research in the classroom combined with workshops for colleagues across the alliance to develop a collaborative approach to professional development. In several TSAs, action research focused on the motivation and engagement of students in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, and its findings were used to inform the creation of challenging and engaging units of work on the topics of film, storytelling, reading for pleasure and intercultural understanding. One TSA chose to focus its research on a project involving primary to secondary school transition, with innovative work on adapting the Year 7 curriculum to improve teaching and learning in oracy. Across the board, action research encouraged teachers to explore leading practice in their own schools and nationally, to take quantitative and qualitative measurements, and to gauge impact on students. In one example, a TSA researched spontaneous use of the target language and worked closely with PGCE trainees from a local university to look at the impact of developing students' questioning skills.

The application of action research methods has encouraged teachers to take risks, to look beyond their own practice and to refine what they do. Many TSAs commented on the benefits of working together with colleagues, especially in cross-phase partnerships. They gained skills in measuring and analysing attainment and progress. In this section, read in more detail about some of the projects which have enhanced the curriculum, inspired teachers and raised motivation amongst students.

1 Developing teachers' language teaching practice

Teaching school alliance:	Belleville Teaching School Alliance
Teaching school:	Belleville Primary School
Schools involved:	Beatrix Potter Primary School Belleville Primary School Brandlehow Primary School Christ Church Primary School (Kensington & Chelsea) Clare House Primary School Earlsfield Primary School Falconbrook Primary School

Context

Belleville Teaching School Alliance is committed to working together to improve teaching and learning in languages. With the challenge of providing language lessons throughout the four years of Key Stage 2, the TSA recognises that the colleagues involved need to be more proficient and confident in language teaching practice.

Therefore, the TSA has devised a series of workshops looking at various aspects of language teaching methodology, including games, storytelling and assessment. Teachers are then encouraged to carry out action research in their own schools and report back at the next workshop.

Description

The teaching school is running a series of workshops to develop teachers' language teaching practice. Seven teachers from six schools within the alliance have participated in the workshops so far. The workshops are led by the TSA's lead teacher for languages and each focuses on a different aspect of language teaching methodology. Each workshop runs on a Thursday during the school day.

The workshop themes were selected through conversation at senior leadership level, through email/phone conversations with the teaching school's lead teacher and also through a teaching school audit completed by participants at the beginning of the Languages Support Programme.

Workshop 1 focused on: different learning styles, memorisation and questioning techniques; using songs, rhymes, puppets and actions; and storylining.

Workshop 2 focused on: assessment; levelling work; and recognising and planning for progression.

The materials and resources from the workshops have been shared with participants, facilitating dissemination within their own schools. Materials will also be disseminated to all alliance schools. Selected materials will be shared via the teaching school website, accompanied by guidelines to assist schools outside the alliance wanting to undertake a similar initiative.

Following each workshop, teachers are asked to go back to their schools and carry out a small action research project, and to report on it at the next session. Examples include:

- Creating and sharing videos of good practice in MFL teaching and learning, to support training within own school
- Developing knowledge of games and using actions
- Implementing a simple listening assessment
- Introducing more authentic stories across Years 3 to 6
- Carrying out more reading and writing activities across all year groups
- Meeting with teachers to share level skills sets and descriptors

Future workshops are planned that will focus on further aspects of language teaching methodology and will provide support to teachers in writing up their action research. This action research (and any accompanying resources) will then be published on the teaching school website.

Alongside this initiative, the teaching school has also offered a language improvement course for teachers needing to develop their knowledge, skills and confidence in the French language itself. Some teachers have attended both courses, further embedding the learning taking place and improving their confidence and classroom practice.

The languages lead teacher has also been supported in undertaking an action research project focusing on making the most effective use of gesture in the languages classroom. The report is published both by CfBT and on the teaching school website.

Impact

The workshops have received excellent feedback from attendees (100% positive) with comments such as:

- *'so useful – thank you – it is having an impact on my school's language learning'*
- *'great ideas for teaching and assessment/levelling, with many useful handouts'*

Participants were also asked to identify the impact on their teaching practice. Responses included:

- *'teaching more sentence-making rather than just vocabulary – more useful'*
- *'increased use of actions to support memorisation'*
- *'more pupil-led activities'*
- *'developing storytelling in the classroom and measuring the impact'*
- *'new ideas/games/strategies to implement: renewed enthusiasm!'*
- *'disseminating to other teachers'*
- *'will have staff meeting to share ideas for French teaching'*

One subject leader created good practice videos after the first workshop, which she has shared with other project participants.

It is hoped that this collaborative, action research way of working will support the development of a more consistent approach to language teaching and learning across the teaching school alliance.

Contact details

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2 Language improvement for primary teachers of languages

Teaching school alliance:	**Peninsula Teaching School Partnership**
Teaching school:	**Penrice Community College**
Schools involved:	Bishop Bronescombe C of E (VA) Primary School Charlestown Primary School Mount Charles Primary School Newquay Junior Academy St Mary's C of E Primary School St Minver Primary School St Petroc's Primary School Whitstone Primary School

Context

This TSA recognises the importance of primary teachers' confidence and competence in the use of target language for effective provision across Key Stage 2 in their feeder schools. The teaching school therefore offered a free language improvement course, using the resources produced by CfBT, to members of staff at these schools. The schools involved are also linked to the language department of the teaching school, where primary teachers have a secondary 'buddy'. To evaluate the effectiveness of their approach, the teaching school carried out some action research to establish whether the course helped primary teachers to gain confidence in their spoken language and pronunciation.

Description

This research focused on helping primary teachers to become more confident in teaching French, and specifically helping them to improve their pronunciation through the use of phonics. This was because the primary teachers felt that their lack of confidence came from a fear of mispronouncing the language and therefore passing on mistakes to the children. Running the course with a focus on phonics was expected to support the teachers' own pronunciation as well as offering a new methodology for classroom practice.

This research was important to Penrice because they hoped to see an improvement in the children's pronunciation as a result, and hoped to prevent mispronounced words from being embedded in the early stages of language learning.

Twelve teachers attended the course, which ran weekly after school throughout the autumn term of 2012. The nine sessions lasted for two hours each, and teachers were given a series of tasks, making 30 hours of study in total. The course was based on the CfBT modules but was adapted to focus more clearly on pronunciation. Alongside these lessons, the teachers attended 'Experience days' sessions at Penrice where they worked with their own Year 5 and Year 6 classes along with Year 10 language leaders.

In order to address the main aims of the project, a mixed-method approach was used including both quantitative and qualitative data. Primary data was obtained through a questionnaire to participants, with triangulation used to ensure reliability. The supporting research method aimed to evaluate teacher confidence and pronunciation through classroom observations of willing participants. Observations took an informal approach with the course trainer in the role of a 'participant observer'. It was felt that this approach would offer further confidence to the teacher and it was stressed that the observations were in no way judgmental. Results were analysed and used to validate responses made in the questionnaire.

Key findings showed that 100% of participants felt they could pronounce more language accurately at the end of the course than they had at the beginning, with 11 of the 12 feeling that they could pronounce *'a lot more language accurately'.* When asked how confident they felt about reading or pronouncing previously unseen vocabulary or phrases in French, 100% expressed that they could now read *'a lot more French'* or *'I can now read any French'.* This was validated when the teachers were given a book to read by applying the rules they had learnt. They had little hesitation and accurate pronunciation was noted.

Teachers were encouraged throughout the course to incorporate more everyday language into the classroom. Focused activities introduced a range of praise words, classroom instructions and general questioning techniques. The questionnaire at the end of the course showed that all participating teachers felt *'much more confident'* about teaching French since participating in the course.

Impact

All participating teachers reported an increase in their confidence in pronouncing, speaking and reading French. Qualitative data identified the ability to read aloud as a major step forward for some teachers. One teacher commented: *'I wanted to link this book to my topic on habitats but was unsure of some pronunciation so had avoided reading it before.'* She was later observed in her school reading the book to the children confidently and with accuracy.

All twelve teachers responded that they thought learning another language could have a *'great deal of benefit to literacy skills'*, bearing out theories of language learning which argue that language learning aids general cognition.

The course has enabled them to take ownership of their own further development. An additional outcome is that several teachers have plans to cascade their new skills to colleagues in their schools.

At the request of the participants, a further language improvement course will be run in autumn 2013. It is clear that this course has created a more sustainable model in the participating schools, and that the research model has provided data to support the usefulness of offering such courses to primary colleagues.

Contact details

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3

Linking Modern Foreign Languages with English in Upper Key Stage 2

Teaching school alliance:	Sheffield Teaching School Alliance
Teaching school:	Silverdale School
Schools involved:	Porter Croft C of E Primary School Silverdale School

Context

This TSA is committed to embedding languages in the primary curriculum by linking it to other subjects, particularly English, so that the two may be developed in a mutually supportive way. Silverdale Teaching School has already done much useful work in this area in collaboration with teachers and pupils in Lower Key Stage 2 in four feeder primary schools. Through participation in the Languages Support Programme (LSP), they have been able to continue this into Upper Key Stage 2. In order to measure the impact of such links on teaching and learning across the Key Stage 2 curriculum, a classroom-based action research project was undertaken at Porter Croft C of E Primary School.

Description

Porter Croft is an inner-city school in challenging circumstances, serving a multicultural population of children from 19 diverse ethnic backgrounds who use 24 different languages. In 2007, literacy levels were well below average, which prompted the new headteacher to adopt Talk for Learning as the key strategy to underpin all teaching throughout the school. There ensued a period of rapid improvement in attainment, confidence and behaviour.

Used as part of the Talk approach, the cross-curricular French modules had produced encouraging results in Lower Key Stage 2 and the LSP provided the funding to carry this through into Upper Key Stage 2. Talk and communication skills remain high profile across the whole curriculum. Pupils rehearse ideas and build oral confidence with Talk Partners prior to class discussion. This allows time for the extension of vocabulary and ideas before undertaking any written work. This approach has extremely strong parallels with the aims, strategies and methodology of the Key Stage 2 Framework for Languages and even beyond into Key Stage 3. The teaching of French and English alongside each other at this higher level inevitably presented much greater challenges, but by means of collaborative planning with primary class teachers, the secondary MFL specialist and primary outreach teacher developed a series of modules. These modules mirror and reinforce, within weekly French lessons, the English learning objectives in terms of grammar and genre, to the mutual benefit of teaching and learning in both languages. One example of this was a poetry module which explored simile, alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhythm, repetition and rhyme.

Action research was undertaken to measure the impact of using generic language learning strategies, for example actions, visuals and text cards. Cognates, talk partners and performance were also researched, along with the use of the interactive whiteboard to support reading and writing tasks. The links between English and French lessons in terms of the simultaneous study of grammar and genre were investigated. A variety of methods including teacher and pupil questionnaires, interviews and observations were employed to assess and compare the children's oral confidence in each language.

Overwhelmingly, pupils and teaching staff acknowledged the importance of the above-mentioned strategies and saw them as mutually supportive in both languages. Pupils placed great value on the consistency of the Talk approach, particularly Talk Partners.

One child asked: *'Don't all schools do it like this, then?'*

Other comments were:

'The areas where French grammar is linked to that for English represent excellent practice.' (Visiting School Improvement Consultant)

'I have seen methodology not only for quality teaching in French, but which is immediately applicable to my English lessons.' (Visiting teacher observing a Year 5 French lesson on complex sentence building)

The action research project showed that adopting the Talk approach across the whole curriculum supports all pupils whatever their level of ability, but also goes beyond academic achievement. There have been significant social benefits including a marked improvement in behaviour. Teachers are convinced that this approach teaches children to express their thoughts in meaningful discussion and to listen more carefully to others.

Impact

The action research confirmed that pupils see the languages/talk strategies as contributing significantly to their overall progress. Proof of this is the rapid improvement in results at Porter Croft, from 28% combined Level 4+ in 2007 to 85% Level 4+ in 2012. The school has also seen a change in ethos which has had a positive effect on pupil behaviour and general confidence.

Indeed, this approach is making children more explicitly aware of the mechanics and structures needed to progress in languages. One pupil commented: *'I can see this will help me in Year 6 and 7 and forever.'* French writing outcomes are of a higher standard than might be expected at Key Stage 2, a factor to be considered in transition planning. The headteacher of Silverdale is to set up a working party to consider literacy transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3.

The headteacher at Porter Croft wrote to the project lead: *'The action research has really made me think about how integral what you do for us in languages/literacy is... You are leading us from languages in our school being an "add-on" to being an integral and valued part of the school curriculum.'* On the strength of the research, he gave a talk entitled 'Languages matter: making every Sheffield child articulate and literate (ESCAL)' to a wide audience of local authority senior leaders, teachers, governors and parents. The headteacher will disseminate further as a member of the ESCAL steering group and the Sheffield Hallam University Advisory Group.

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4 Learners' use of spontaneous target language

Teaching school alliance:	St Marylebone Teaching School Alliance
Teaching school:	St Marylebone C of E School
Schools involved:	Capital City Academy (Brent) St Marylebone C of E School Westminster Academy

Context

St Marylebone is a central London girls' comprehensive school with a mixed sixth form. From regular discussions amongst language teachers in the TSA it became clear that raising student confidence in speaking was a high priority. Fear of speaking in the target language was the biggest single factor that discouraged learners from continuing languages to GCSE level. For the purposes of this action research it was decided to focus on learners in Year 8 and Year 10, with the hope that a better understanding of this issue might achieve a higher uptake of languages at Key Stage 4.

Description

In order to address the aims of the project a mixed-method approach was used. The TSA schools participating in the Language Support Programme (LSP) undertook a student survey, and then detailed action research was carried out in St Marylebone School. Students from Year 10 and from a middle-ability set in Year 8 were chosen and both qualitative and quantitative data was collected.

The research started with a series of interviews of eight Year 10 learners who had not opted to continue with a language, in order to establish the reasons for their choices. All the students interviewed considered speaking to be their weakest skill and were daunted by the prospect of a GCSE speaking examination. This reinforced the value of the research, and the answers students gave in these interviews guided the planning of the questionnaire used with 20 Year 8 students. Teachers worked together to plan a detailed survey and to prepare their learners for this task.

The survey consisted of three separate sections. The first set of questions related to learners' perceptions of themselves as Spanish speakers and was written in the first person, for example: *'If I think I might make a mistake I prefer not to speak'*. There were five options in the answers, ranging from *'strongly agree'* to *'strongly disagree'*. The second section provided students with different typical speaking situations which they regularly face in class. They were asked to rank these activities in order of how confident they felt about performing them. In the third section students were asked to expand on their own answers in an unstructured written response.

Teachers found the results of the survey very interesting, and the findings will be shared with colleagues from across the schools. For example, in response to the statement: *'I often know the answer but don't want to put my hand up'*, the great majority agreed, suggesting that it is clearly a confidence issue rather than fear of having an incorrect response. A total of 17 out of the 20 students either believed other students were stronger Spanish speakers, or weren't sure, highlighting the fact that students are undervaluing their own speaking ability.

The activities in which they felt least confident were when it involved forming and asking questions for themselves and answering unpredictable questions spontaneously.

St Marylebone colleagues have established a set of patterns from the students' responses and are sharing the following recommendations within their department and across other TSA schools:

1. More curriculum time should be devoted to the formulation of questions, including possibly devoting more time to allowing pupils to form interesting and original questions which they genuinely wish to have answered by their peers.
2. More class activities should involve 'no hands up' questioning.
3. There should be more emphasis on free-form conversation and role-play, without too much insistence on flawless language and grammar.

Colleagues at St Marylebone intend to revisit this same class towards the end of Year 8, having focused on their speaking skills throughout the year, and will thus ascertain how their confidence has developed.

Impact

Students were extremely willing to undertake this survey. They proved themselves to be eloquent in their responses, and teachers have noticed an improvement in student attitudes and relationships within the classroom, which may well be as a result of having taken part in this research. It is also felt that this type of survey is extremely useful to teachers who wish to have a better understanding of the needs of individuals in their class, for example in the case of a new teacher taking over a group in a new academic year.

Results from such a survey will inevitably differ from group to group (as indeed they did from school to school) but they provide a springboard for schools to share good practice and offer school-to-school support where needed. The survey could also be adapted to focus on different skills.

At St Marylebone it is the language department's intention to roll the survey out to the whole of the Year 8 cohort and adapt the Year 9 enrichment course according to the results. They will also use what they have learnt in terms of types of activities and areas of low confidence to improve their Year 9 scheme of work in order to encourage maximum GCSE uptake.

Project outputs, including the action research report and the questions used in the survey will be published on the TSA website along with guidance to enable other schools to adapt them for their own use.

Contact details

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5 How can secondary schools ease the transition for primary school pupils, with particular reference to speaking in languages?

Teaching school alliance:	The Partnership Teaching School
Teaching school:	Fiveways Special School
Schools involved:	Stanchester Academy

Context

This school is a semi-rural comprehensive with approximately 900 students aged 11–16 on roll. It was graded as Satisfactory by Ofsted last year. All students learn French from Year 7 to Year 9, some learn Spanish or German in Year 9, and students choose one of these languages, or no language, for GCSE. The school hopes to increase uptake in Key Stage 4, and offer more languages in Key Stage 3. This project has been developed as a result of exploring why pupils in primary schools have speaking as their best skill, whereas in Key Stage 4, speaking is their worst or least confident skill.

Description

This project aimed to answer the question: *'What can secondary schools learn from primary schools regarding the learning of speaking skills in languages?'* Sub-questions arose from this, specifically:

- *What role does environment play?*
- *What factors inhibit students' speaking skills at secondary level?*
- *To what extent do teaching methods used in other subjects contribute to students' confidence in speaking?*

A questionnaire given to Year 6 and Year 7 pupils confirmed that they found it intimidating to speak French in front of a large number of their peers, and they felt that speaking tasks should be relevant.

Key Stage 3 students are at a difficult developmental stage, often concerned about their self-image and reluctant to take centre stage in any way. This is clearly at odds with oral work involving speaking in front of the class, so the researching teacher was keen to develop tasks which overcame this tension.

Existing listening activities were deemed expensive, boring or irrelevant, and rarely modelled both the lexical and grammatical aspects of a lesson's learning objectives. So, two key obstacles had to be overcome:

1. How could teachers encourage students to speak in a way that allows teacher assessment, without having to speak in front of the whole class?
2. How could teachers model language to pupils in a relevant and engaging way, including the necessary grammatical and lexical items?

To answer the first question, teachers investigated 'talking' products such as talking tins. These allowed students to record themselves, working with just one partner, then review and assess their work themselves, but also keeping the recording so that teachers could assess them after the class had left. Students found this engaging and much less threatening than speaking in front of larger numbers.

Another way of reducing the threat, which proved very effective, was the use of props such as large microphones, wigs and other props, so that students were adopting a different persona.

Software and apps allowed the second question to be addressed. The use of leading-edge technology is engaging in itself, and applications such as PuppetPals allowed the teachers to create endlessly varied, comical shows modelling any desired language.

The researching teacher visited primary schools and followed their example in terms of furniture arrangement to increase the familiarity of the environment for Year 7 pupils. He found that the familiar environment had a positive effect on student confidence and therefore their willingness to participate, particularly as 'social seating' is designed to encourage small group discussion, regardless of the area of the curriculum.

The teacher's findings show that techniques which can help a pupil to learn in Key Stage 2 can be adapted and used in Key Stage 3 and vice versa, so the age of the pupils should not always determine the teaching approach.

Impact

The researching teacher states that this project has had a significant effect on the school's planning for Year 7. Classroom management in Year 7 classrooms already reflects the primary methodology more accurately, and teaching methods are now being adapted for older pupils as well.

The teacher was extremely impressed by the effect on students of the PuppetPals app, which had the benefits of being comical, using faces and voices which are familiar to the students and producing the exact grammar and vocabulary needed. He commented: *'It is hard to overstate the level of engagement produced by the PuppetPals cartoons... For an investment of less than two pounds this is a vital piece of software for the languages classroom.'*

As a result of the props such as talking tins, microphones and wigs, students who previously did not want to speak in front of the class now ask for the huge microphone, and are prepared to speak in the target language when hiding behind a prop such as a wig. The research has already had an impact on students' participation and learning. The school is now committed to extending this approach, where an emphasis is placed on creating a comfortable, non-threatening environment. This change in approach is reflected in the resources budget. Rather than replacing textbooks, funds will be used to purchase props and other engaging items to reduce the intimidating elements of learning a language.

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Grammar

Grammar

Ofsted's report on Modern Languages, *Achievement and challenge 2007-2010*, noted that in primary schools, *'knowledge about the language and understanding of basic grammar were generally developing well'*. Good provision was seen in secondary schools where *'students had the building blocks of grammatical knowledge so that they could say what they wanted to say'* and outstanding use of ICT contributed to good grammatical understanding. However, in only 20% of the secondary schools visited, *'students in Key Stage 3 had a good understanding of, and an ability to apply, grammatical rules'* and all too often students struggled with extended creative writing *'because they did not know, or could not apply, grammatical rules'*.

A number of teaching school alliances (TSAs) chose to include a powerful grammatical focus in their projects, ranging right through from Key Stage 2 to A level. In their collaborative work on cross-phase frameworks, primary and secondary language teachers looked closely at the place of grammar in coherent curriculum design. In one TSA, schemes of work for Spanish were adapted to support grammatical progression for Years 5–7. In another, 'writing walls' for Years 3–7 were created to support pupils in applying basic grammar, along with 'writing portfolios' to illustrate progression in writing. One TSA built on existing expertise within the alliance to develop the use of music and video to teach grammar in primary languages. At Key Stage 4, one TSA made good use of ICT to reinforce knowledge of grammatical rules and structures, by creating a website where students can access a range of interesting and appealing interactive grammar-based activities in school, at home or on their smartphone. The website also offers AS and A level students grammar exercises and games in four languages.

These approaches have highlighted the importance of a clear focus on grammatical progression, more coherent schemes of work have been put in place and primary pupils have been given greater opportunity to explore grammatical concepts. The grammar strategies at secondary level have increased students' understanding and confidence in applying grammatical knowledge. In this section, read in more detail about some of the projects which have supported these improvements.

1

Teaching the sound-spelling link using *Phonemia*

Teaching school alliance:	**Together to Succeed (T2S)**
Teaching school:	**St John Vianney RC Primary School**
Schools involved:	English Martyrs' School High Tunstall School Manor College of Technology

Context

The Together to Succeed TSA, based in Hartlepool, includes all primary, secondary and special schools in the borough. Three secondary languages departments felt that students in Key Stage 4 lack confidence in using the target language and that more systematic work should be done in Key Stage 3 to help learners make a successful transition to the GCSE course. Teachers produced a 'Talking Toolbox' to promote extended speaking and more effective use of the target language in Year 9. They also decided to emphasise the sound-spelling link with Year 7 students, and this aspect of the programme has had signal success.

Description

The main project used the metaphor of a carpenter's toolbox to construct grammatically and syntactically correct sentences with different tools representing different parts of speech. Each classroom has a large poster with pictures of *Fabrice*, and the word 'carpenter' is used as a prompt to encourage students to create extended sentences.

At Manor College, the department also decided to teach the phoneme/grapheme link to Year 7 classes in a systematic way in order to prepare them to use the Talking Toolbox. They used a suite of presentations produced for another project in the North East. This suite is called *Phonemia*, the name given to different coloured 'flowers', each of which represents a French phoneme. There are three phases in each presentation. In the first phase, eight petals appear, one by one, and present a word and picture containing the phoneme being practised. Students may repeat, but are not required to respond. In the next phase, another flower appears with eight different pictures and a list of the written form of the words. Students are required to work out which word goes with each picture, and to do this, they are taught a series of phrases, each of which begins with *'Je pense que ce mot va avec cette image parce que…'* and is completed with a phrase such as *'j'ai deviné', 'je le connais déjà', 'je l'ai appris à l'école primaire'.* The third phase is a screen showing five or six sentences to practise the phoneme in question, for example: *'Je ne vais pas au collège aujourd'hui. J'ai mal à la gorge... Quel dommage!'* Students are invited to read aloud the sentences and their performance is judged by the rest of the class.

The suite was created not just to help learners to link phonemes to their graphic representations, but also to encourage spontaneous use of longer utterances in the target language. The intended effect is to develop language learning strategies at word level and sentence level, and to enable students to hear the intonation patterns of the language in a systematic way. All teachers are reporting sustained engagement during the lessons. Some sentences are quite transparent, for example *'Je refuse de te dire le secret'*, while others are less so, for example *'Qu'est-ce que tu as remarqué?'* In total there are over 500 different words in phases one and two, so there is also a solid corpus of vocabulary on which to build during Key Stage 3.

The suite was intended to be used for short periods during language lessons, with one phoneme being practised over three or four lessons, but the department at Manor College decided to dedicate one lesson per week to the work. So far, the generous allocation of time has been shown to be effective.

Impact

After half a term working with the materials, all students are becoming more fluent in using the expressions they have been taught. One class was filmed working on *Phonemia* and the level of engagement and enjoyment was clearly very high. In particular the boys were vying with each other to link words to pictures with explanation in French. Although they regarded the activity as a game, it was clear that they were using a lot of target language and making very good progress. During the third phase activity, students wanted to read the sentences and the teacher recorded their performance. They also attempted to work out the meaning of the sentences without prompting by the teacher.

According to the teachers, the difference in pronunciation between these students and previous cohorts, and indeed when compared with Year 8 students, is marked. Year 7 students confidently attempt to read the final phase 3 sentences, and are not discouraged when they make a mistake. In fact, mistakes are not as random as those made even by Year 11 students. The effect of teaching the set phrases for phase 2 (offering reasons for linking a word to a picture) is also clearly observable, since many students are using these phrases in their 'normal' lessons, for example, *'je pense que'* so the subject leader is confident that it is improving their ability to use the target language for real purposes.

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2

French phonics: progression in sound-spelling links from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3

Teaching school alliance:	Leicester Teaching School Alliance (LeTS)
Teaching school:	Rushey Mead School
Schools involved:	Babington Community College Crownhills Community College Granby Primary School Rushey Mead Primary School Rushey Mead School Sir Jonathan North Community College

Context

This TSA is committed to encouraging collaboration between primary and secondary schools and to enhancing transition arrangements wherever possible. In terms of the languages curriculum, there is a specific need to improve liaison strategies whilst primary schools develop their language teaching. Students' knowledge and an understanding of French sound-spelling links was selected as a focus because this area was felt to be in need of improvement across phases. We wanted to explore the potential impact of progression in French phonics on learners' pronunciation and on other language skills, whilst drawing on primary teachers' expertise in teaching phonics in English.

Description

This project was devised to enable teachers from primary and secondary schools to work together to focus on improving learning outcomes by developing learners' understanding of French phonics. We felt that this area was underdeveloped in both phases, but could greatly benefit learning and achievement in French, across all four language skills.

Our project began with a full day's session to bring teachers together and share current practice and perceptions, and we found that experience of specifically building in phonics-related work varied. The Specialist Leader of Education (SLE) facilitated an exploration of how a focus on sound-spelling links could support learning, and shared ongoing work at the teaching school, including a visit to a lesson focusing on French phonics. We also looked at 'French Phonic Friends', a programme developed for primary classes by a group of Shropshire teachers under the Linkedup Award Scheme, and its potential for use in secondary as well as primary schools. The resources (available on the Linkedup website) were printed and shared amongst the group, as were the resources already being used in the teaching school.

Following this, we felt it was crucial to clarify what our starting points were, and undertook self-audits to see how much specific teaching of phonics took place in lessons. Using student/pupil questionnaires and tasks, and some more detailed interviews, we found out about students' understanding of pronunciation patterns in French, their ability to apply this when reading new words aloud, and how levels of understanding affect their attitudes towards speaking and reading aloud in the language. We intend to compare these findings with follow-up audits later in the school year to help measure progress, but we are already noticing improvements in our lessons.

The group continues to share experiences and reflections via half-day or twilight meetings, and we have a designated area on the Leicester Schools learning platform, where we can upload resources and ideas for activities. In addition to the materials developed by group members, there are links to external resources, such as a programme for teaching French phonics developed by Jim McElwee.

A central focus for us was to share experience and expertise between primary and secondary phases. Ideally we would have liked to involve teachers from linked schools, for example a secondary plus one or more feeder schools, but this has not been possible for all, so in some cases there is collaboration between schools without transfer links. To learn more about each other's practice, we are visiting each other's classrooms, and where possible, secondary teachers observe English phonics lessons – to find out more about this area of primary education and to explore what practice we might draw upon in French lessons.

By the end of the year we hope to have developed a useful resource which will include materials, ideas for activities, and reflections on what has worked well and what was less successful. In the second year of our project we hope to explore further the focus on progression and to involve more schools.

Impact

We were enthused by the launch event and, armed with resources and ideas, started to try out activities and materials in a highly focused way. We agreed to reflect regularly on our experiences, and share our thoughts about the effectiveness of the strategies and activities we are trying out. Needless to say, a focus on phonics is included more regularly and more systematically in lessons than before. Our understanding of the importance and potential of addressing phonics is deepening, as is our range of strategies.

When we explained the project, students were also enthusiastic. Questionnaires showed that being very unsure about how to pronounce words, even in the case of familiar language, was a major problem for them that affected their confidence in class and often their attitude to French. Now learners say that because the teacher has explained and modelled how to say things, they feel more confident saying things themselves, and some report that this makes it easier to remember pronunciation. We are all noticing more accurate pronunciation amongst learners, and a greater willingness to join in oral class activities, including reading aloud, and helping or correcting each other. Key Stage 3 students say they feel less embarrassed because they know it is good to try, and accurate pronunciation is a common objective in lessons.

We feel other aspects of language learning are improving, too, such as better spelling, and more confidence when listening to longer texts with unfamiliar language. Better motivation and more positive attitudes towards risk-taking have been a real bonus.

Contact details

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3

Interactive language skills support website for Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5

Teaching school alliance:	**South East Faith Schools Alliance**
Teaching school:	**St John the Baptist School**
Schools involved:	Jubilee High School St Andrew's School, Leatherhead St John the Baptist School The Bishop David Brown School

Context

This TSA has recognised the importance of independent learning in raising standards as well as in developing learners' grammatical knowledge to ensure they can use language successfully. The teaching school is also aware that many learners need the motivation of something different to support and challenge them in their examination practice. At St John the Baptist School, teachers within and outside the languages department collaborated with a web designer to create a website that could be used by students across the TSA to work with materials in different languages to reinforce their grammatical knowledge and support their examination preparation.

Description

Teachers worked with a web designer to develop an interactive French, German, Italian and Spanish language skills support website for all schools in the TSA. The website provides a range of interactive practice and grammar-based activities for learners, covering all four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Many of the activities are based around thinking skills, collaborative learning strategies and games.

Teachers worked together within and across languages to identify the structures and vocabulary they thought required the most practice. Students were also involved in contributing ideas and saying what they felt would be most useful to them. The website was trialled with a number of secondary schools in the TSA and feedback has supported further development.

The website is colourful and visually appealing, which helps to ensure students want to use it. The games are categorised by grammar structure and offer feedback on how well students have done. There are also links to other websites that students can access to help their language learning.

Past papers with mark schemes are available for practice so that learners can see how well they have done. Students are encouraged to practise for their GCSE assessments through a range of interesting and appealing language activities which develop and reinforce their knowledge of grammatical rules and structures.

The school has built on the success of the website for Key Stage 4 students to develop it further for AS and A level students in all four languages. This area includes a range of examination-related activities, with topic-based texts and tasks, interactive grammar exercises and games, as well as past papers for practice. Feedback from students has already been very positive. They appreciate the opportunities to work independently, to learn at their own pace and to set their own targets as well as the ease of access including use on a smartphone. They feel it has widened their range of language through access to additional reading materials including up-to-date texts and news reports in the language they are studying. They have been involved in the development of the website and have suggested areas for improvement, including examples of marked essays and more speaking activities.

Impact

The creation of the language website has had a real impact on students and their motivation to revise and practise their language skills. In particular it has been very successful with weaker boys who in the past have found revision for GCSE very difficult. Teachers have reported that through using the games and grammar quizzes motivation has increased and as a result standards have improved. They have observed their students' engagement and confidence through this opportunity for independent revision and learning. Students themselves have commented:

'I like this website because I can work independently'

'I can decide how fast/quickly I can work'

'I can set my own pace'

'It's fun and I can revise from home'

'I can learn new vocabulary'

'I can improve my understanding/knowledge of grammar'

'I can practise Listening and Reading papers from home and I can get immediate feedback'

Contact details

NAME	JOB TITLE	SCHOOL NAME
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4 A mixed-skills approach to reading and writing

Teaching school alliance:	Together to Succeed (T2S)
Teaching school:	St John Vianney RC Primary School
Schools involved:	Dyke House Sports College Elwick Primary School Greatham Primary School Hart Primary School Manor College of Technology St Aidan's Primary School St Cuthbert's Primary School St Helen's Primary School St John Vianney RC Primary School

Context

The Together to Succeed TSA, based in Hartlepool, includes all primary, secondary and special schools in the borough. It aspires to develop leading practitioners in primary and special schools and to support secondary departments working in partner primary schools to adapt their practice to match the content and methodology to the teaching and learning approaches generally used in primary schools. As part of the Languages Support Programme (LSP) teachers worked together with a tutor to explore a range of books in French and to look at ways in which the texts could promote understanding of grammatical structures with the effective use of bilingual dictionaries.

Description

A series of twilight courses explored eight different books appropriate to each year of Key Stage 2. Six primary teachers and two secondary teachers attended the courses. The group looked at two books in each session and discussed ways of exploiting the text. Some books lend themselves to creative writing tasks. For example, *Je m'habille et je te croque* (Bénédicte Guettier) was extended with ancillary materials to play the game *Quelle heure est-il, Monsieur Loup?* and then to model for children ways of creating their own story. Similarly, *Qui conduit?* (Leo Timmers) allowed children to create their own version of the story and some pupils included animals which were not present in the original story, but which they had remembered from previous learning. These, and other books, were also chosen for their repetitive syntax, which helps children practise and assimilate structures without explicit teaching. Some stories may be acted out, which encourages children to learn them by heart.

Some books, such as *Superbouquin* (Alan Mets) and *C'est moi le plus fort!* (Mario Ramos) were chosen for their theme and language. They contain colloquial and sometimes rather racy expressions which we thought would appeal particularly to the boys. When the group was looking at *Toutes les couleurs* (Alex Sanders), one of the teachers said that her Year 3 class would immediately recognise examples of ellipsis, much to the amazement of the secondary colleagues present. *Petit-bleu et Petit-jaune* (Leo Lionni) has been enjoyed by the children despite its somewhat obscure theme. *Le roi, sa femme et le petit prince* (Mario Ramos) is a variation on the traditional children's song.

Teachers were taught the song and given a specially designed presentation to use to teach it to the children. After the children have learnt the song, they are introduced to the book which adds a different character to each day of the week, for example, *'Mercredi matin, le roi, sa femme, le petit prince, le pingouin et l'hippopotame à vélo sont venus chez moi pour me serrer la pince.'*

Children in Year 6 can revisit the story with a specially written version which introduces the imperfect tense, for example: *'Mercredi matin, le roi, sa femme, le petit prince, un grand lion jaune qui rugissait et un singe qui mangeait une banane sont venus chez moi pour me serrer la pince.'* Although schools have not yet put in place a programme of study that would allow Year 6 to perform at this level, the activities show what achievement might be like after four years of a progressive scheme of work.

Teachers have also appreciated the importance of using whole texts to help children become accustomed to the intonation patterns of the language. One of the teachers said that she had practised 'swimming' sentences to get children to experience the rising intonation and final fall of French prosody.

Impact

Primary teachers appreciate that second language teaching methodology uses many of the techniques they use every day, such as exploring texts, sharing ideas and synthesising them. They model writing on the whiteboard to show children how to adapt texts.

The activities designed for each book and discussed in the twilight sessions have been very useful as a way of demonstrating how to use the target language to model activities on the whiteboard in the same manner that teachers operate in other areas of the curriculum. Primary colleagues feel that, ideally, they are best placed to deliver the second language programme, not only because effective teaching is similar to the way they operate already, but also because they can practise structures or activities in short bursts at appropriate times during the week: *'Petits paquets de français'*.

The books are seen to reinforce general literacy as well as enhance the language learning process. These books also lend themselves to systematic development of dictionary skills and children are able to interpret the definitions, for example, 'canard, noun. masc.' to select *'un canard'* or *'le canard'* as appropriate, when writing their own books.

Secondary teachers see the potential for influencing change in their departments and working towards a continuity of approach which will build on children's prior experience when they come into Year 7. The areas seen as most in need of discussion are effective use of target language, embedding reading into the scheme of work, and effective use of dictionaries.

Contact details

NAME	JOB TITLE	SCHOOL NAME
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http://www.t2s.org.uk

5

The Literacy Link: partnership between English and languages departments

Teaching school alliance:	**Northern Lights Teaching School Alliance**
Teaching school:	**St Thomas More Catholic School**
Schools involved:	St Thomas More Catholic School

Context

St Thomas More is the lead school in Northern Lights, an alliance of secondary schools in Tyneside. The school's literacy coordinator, whose role is to ensure that all subjects of the curriculum support students' general literacy, has planned a project with the languages department that will incorporate techniques currently used by the English department to develop creativity in speaking and writing. The lessons are planned around themes explored in a book describing the childhood of a boy in the North East in the 1950s. Year 8 classes have worked on the theme in their French and English lessons.

Description

A sequence of lessons was planned by a linguist and the literacy coordinator. The lessons were designed following the English department's practice of planning creative speaking and writing around the five senses. Students draw round their hand and label each finger with one of the five senses; this is to remind them that their creative work must reflect each sense. This is a novelty in the Languages department and so the students were surprised to see that they could use the same technique in language learning.

In order to make the link clear, classes learnt the French children's song *Y'a une pie*:

'Y'a une pie dans l'poirier,
J'entends la pie qui chante.
Y'a une pie dans l'poirier,
J'entends la pie chanter.'

New verses were added which incorporate three verbs: *voir*, *entendre* and *sentir*. The students were intrigued to find that the verb sentir can have the sense of 'feel', 'smell' and 'taste'. Once they knew the song, they were challenged to write their own verses, following the syntactic pattern, and using the infinitive (as in the last line), or third person (singular and plural) following *'qui'* (as in the second line). Bilingual dictionaries were made available and teachers revised their use to ensure that all students were able to interpret definitions and apply rules learnt in the song in order to write their own verses.

Students were discouraged from referring to a dictionary as the first resort. Instead, as the lesson proceeded in the target language, they were allowed to jot down words that they noticed. At intervals there was a *'pause dico'* where the class could check the meaning and spelling of the words they had written, and indicate whether they had guessed the meaning correctly.

The next stage of the joint project involved working on a book entitled *Après la Guerre* about a boy growing up in the 1950s. The book explores different themes, such as hygiene, school and entertainment, which may be developed into a discussion about then and now, for an authentic use of the present and imperfect tenses. At a deeper level the book may be used to provoke discussion on themes such as poverty and happiness. Again the theme was the five senses and students concentrated on a picture of two boys looking through holes in a frost-patterned window. The students selected and adapted language from the book to produce interesting and unusual work based on what they might see and hear through the window if they were in the same room. They were surprised at their ability to apply rules creatively and to expand their knowledge of grammar.

In English lessons teachers used the text to reinforce understanding of different parts of speech. These had been previously used in French lessons with a technique developed in primary schools to teach different parts of speech with music and actions. Students enjoyed this and many have reported that it has helped them with their understanding of English grammar.

Impact

The project was approached at sentence and text level, which is not the usual method of presenting a new topic in the languages department, where key vocabulary is generally introduced and learnt by heart. Good practice in the English department has encouraged the languages department to expand its range of teaching and learning strategies. Both teachers and learners have enjoyed the project and students have reported that they particularly enjoyed the opportunity to be creative.

When they are reading *Après la Guerre*, first of all in French, students find that the context and the illustrations allow them to infer, with a high degree of success, the meanings of words before they have recourse to a dictionary. They are pleased that, when they read the text in English, it is like an old friend. This has encouraged the languages department to consider ways of developing learners' confidence to enjoy reading and working with longer texts and to be more creative in their writing.

The languages department are pleased that the programme has supported discussion between themselves and English colleagues in order to improve learners' understanding of how language works, and to explore the use of problem-solving skills to develop language learning strategies. The German version of the book, *Nach dem Krieg*, will be available shortly, so that the same project may be extended across the languages department.

Contact details

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Language improvement

Language improvement

Ofsted's report on Modern Languages, *Achievement and challenge 2007-2010*, called for the Department for Education to support *'the effective consolidation of modern languages in primary schools'*. Ofsted recognised that *'teachers were often skilful, combining very well their knowledge of primary teaching methodology with their knowledge of the language'* but that in order to address *'occasional shortcomings in pronunciation and intonation'* and to enable teachers to sustain the target language confidently in the classroom, well-planned training was important. The report found that schools moving successfully from languages being taught by a specialist to being taught by class teachers drew on carefully managed support and coaching, leading to increasingly confident class teachers and higher standards of teaching.

All teaching school alliances (TSAs) in the programme incorporated an element of language improvement in their work. From day workshops to series of twilight sessions, in-school structured support and coaching, TSAs aimed to develop language knowledge, proficiency and confidence and thereby improve classroom practice. Throughout the country, primary teachers benefited from language training which is relevant to adult learners and which relates to their own professional context, whilst also developing their teaching skills and better understanding learners' progression. Many TSAs focused on sharing good practice across the alliance, developing appropriate materials and training strategies to support non-specialists, whilst several others targeted primary language coordinators with a view to building their capacity to lead language improvement training. In one TSA, headteachers identified and supported 'language champions' in their schools: good or outstanding Key Stage 2 classroom teachers, to lead developments in linguistic skills and intercultural understanding.

In this section, read more about the approaches that have empowered both class teachers and primary language leaders to plan and deliver high-quality lessons. Training evaluations show increased confidence and deeper understanding of primary languages pedagogy. Observations and pupil voice surveys show engaging, purposeful learning and greater teacher proficiency. The role of the trainer has been developed, and new partnerships and networks have been forged through these collaborative projects.

1 Language improvement for primary teachers of languages (George Abbot Teaching School Alliance)

Teaching school alliance:	**George Abbot Teaching School Alliance**
Teaching school:	**George Abbot School**
Schools involved:	Boxgrove Primary School Burpham Primary School George Abbot School

Context

This TSA recognises that if their feeder primary schools are to offer learners a programme that is challenging and rigorous to pupils throughout Key Stage 2, then those teachers involved need to be proficient and confident in their use of the target language and in effective language teaching methodology. The Specialist Leader of Education (SLE) for Languages, who is based in the teaching school, has therefore designed different courses for teachers tailored to individual needs in two of its main feeder primary schools. The overall aims of the courses are to raise the confidence of teachers and to improve progression planning.

Description

For Burpham Primary School, a series of 11 one-hour twilight sessions are planned to run throughout the academic year and all colleagues are encouraged to attend, including the headteacher. Eight teaching colleagues, including some from Key Stage 1, have signed up for the course. The sessions include a presentation and demonstration of specific lexical items within a given topic area. Teachers are then shown how to incorporate progression into their teaching by enabling pupils to build increasingly longer sentences. This might include adding a description or an opinion of an animal, for example. Teachers have the opportunity to practise both the language and the activities with their peers. They are asked to reflect at the end of each session and to consider how best to take that learning forward and implement it in their own classrooms. Materials will be produced to help teachers with their pronunciation and all resources are shared with everyone involved after each session.

For Boxgrove Primary School there is a similar series of 10 one-hour twilight sessions available for eight teaching colleagues. Boxgrove's Languages Coordinator has been working with the SLE to develop her own language and training skills. The model is a coaching one in which the two colleagues plan continuing professional development (CPD) sessions together and then regularly deliver them on a team-teaching basis. The Languages Coordinator has also delivered a session herself, demonstrating that she is developing her confidence as part of the programme. Again, resources are used, discussed and shared on the school's intranet so that colleagues can adapt them for their individual classes, be they younger or older pupils.

The SLE is using the Accelerated Integrated Method (AIM) approach developed by Canadian teacher Wendy Maxwell. It is a method of teaching which is essentially systematic and incorporates substantial use of gesture to support comprehension and recall. Teachers report that they find this fits in well with the gesture strategies they use regularly in other curriculum areas to aid pupils' comprehension of new learning.

In both schools, colleagues share expertise and support one another during the CPD training. Mutual problem-solving forms an integral part of each session; for example teachers might discuss how to present specific language items or activities to learners in different year groups.

The two headteachers are liaising over ways in which to work together. For example, the Languages Coordinator at Boxgrove will visit Burpham to share good practice and there will be a reciprocal visit from a Burpham teacher. Project outputs, including professional development materials and guidelines on AIM methodology will be posted on the TSA website. They will be accompanied by guidance so that teachers in other settings will be able to adapt the materials for their own use.

Impact

Although it is early days, the training has already impacted both on pupils' performance in languages and on teachers' language teaching practice in both primary schools. Colleagues report that pupils are actively engaged in their learning and that the conversations going on are *'amazing'*. The pupils love the actions and find it very easy to remember vocabulary. They learn more readily and are motivated by the highly interactive, fast paced and *'fun'* methodology. One teacher reported that her pupils declared the lesson she taught following her training was *'the best French lesson they had ever had'*. Good progress is in evidence as they are able to make longer sentences, building on their prior knowledge.

A languages lesson observed by the headteacher was deemed to be *'outstanding'* and teachers report that they feel well equipped to adapt what they see in the training sessions to particular topics and year groups. They are making effective use of the interactive whiteboard resources provided during the training sessions.

For the Languages Coordinator, this project has already helped boost the impact she is making on practice in her own school and it is hoped that she will also be able to share her expertise in the partner primary school.

Contact details

NAME	JOB TITLE	SCHOOL NAME
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Gemma Scotting	Languages Coordinator	Boxgrove Primary School

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2 Using film to develop listening and speaking in Key Stage 4

Teaching school alliance:	Millais Teaching School Alliance
Teaching school:	Millais School
Schools involved:	Imberhorne School Millais School

Context

The two teachers leading this project both recognise the importance of creating a varied and more exciting curriculum in Key Stage 4. They wanted to teach their GCSE courses through more interesting and creative contexts, which reflect the interests and experience of 15- and 16-year-old students. The teachers therefore chose film as the context for a GCSE controlled assessment in speaking. They created units of work in French and German, leading to an assessment task which would motivate their students while addressing the requirements of the awarding organisation.

Description

Teachers from two secondary schools initially worked collaboratively to plan and produce resources for a more able Year 10 German group and an average to below-average ability French group. They designed the controlled assessment tasks they would ultimately use to assess their students as well as supporting resources that met the challenge of creating more interesting contexts for GCSE, encouraging students to make links across topics and to use language creatively. The tasks also had to meet the awarding organisation's requirements, following their task-setting rules. The teachers chose films which they thought would engage the learners, and encourage them to talk about topics relevant to their interests. The film *Sommer* was chosen for German. Through their study of this film, students learnt about family and relationships as well as media. Through the film *Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis* for French, the teacher addressed the topics of home town and local area, and town and country.

Within the units of work, particular emphasis was also placed on sound–spelling links and on supporting students in improving pronunciation. From an initial survey conducted with the German class, it appeared that students' confidence in grammar and vocabulary was quite high, but that what they were really worried about when it came to speaking was pronunciation and spontaneity. This, coupled with the GCSE examiners' report on speaking, which highlighted the most common pronunciation mistakes, led to the inclusion of specific phonics tasks in the unit of work. The teacher created a series of starter activities in order to increase the accuracy of pronunciation and students' confidence in speaking. At the beginning of every lesson there is a one minute warm-up where the teacher revisits the phonics they have learnt before moving on to the next focus sound. She commented: *'They really like it – it feels like being in a primary school, which makes them laugh (and me too!).'*

Activities were developed to support students' listening skills, including focused tasks related to the film. New language was used to support learners' speaking. They developed skills of summarising and expressing their opinions through more creative writing tasks such as designing and writing the 'blurb' for their own DVD cover and their own film reviews.

Intercultural understanding was also at the core of both units of work. Through *Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis*, which exploits stereotypes between the south and north of France, learners were invited to reflect on the geographical stereotypes existing in the UK. The German film *Sommer* looks at family relationships and teenage life in Germany, and students were able to make comparisons with their own situation.

Impact

The starter activities indicate the importance of emphasising sound-spelling links throughout language learning. One student commented: *'I am really enjoying the starters and the class activities in German at the moment. I like having help saying how to pronounce letters and it helps me build my confidence in speaking out loud. The starters also make it easier and more enjoyable to learn.'*

The students in both groups were really motivated by watching the films and by the prospect of doing something different and interesting for their controlled assessment. They were able to relate to the films and to engage with and discuss the themes. The French group really appreciated the humour of *Bienvenue chez les Ch'tis*. One learner commented: *'The film was funny; I didn't know that people in northern France spoke like that!'* Both groups found the language challenging at times but this final comment really sums up the impact of delivering a GCSE course that allows students to engage with the subject matter: *'It was hard to talk about the film at first but more interesting than talking about East Grinstead all the time.'*

Contact details

NAME	JOB TITLE	SCHOOL NAME
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Improving partnership working, continuity and progression in primary French

Teaching school alliance:	Westdene Teaching School Alliance
Teaching school:	Westdene Primary School
Schools involved:	Coombe Road Primary Patcham High School Patcham Junior School St Bernadette's Primary School Westdene Primary School

Context

Many primary schools in the Westdene TSA have strong primary languages provision, often delivered by a specialist. The TSA recognises that to support a more sustainable and integrated model of languages provision it is vital to involve the class teacher and to support language learning outside the specialist input. The teaching school therefore devised a project which aimed to improve the confidence and competence of classroom teachers in delivering French in Key Stage 2, and to involve them in developing storytelling techniques, using authentic, age-appropriate texts.

Description

The language improvement course aimed firstly to improve the confidence and competence of classroom teachers and secondly to enable them to support the delivery of the storytelling work. The course was structured around two half-day sessions on consecutive weeks, and the participants were the primary languages coordinators (French specialists) and the classroom teachers whose classes would participate in the storytelling work. This structure ensured that in each school the coordinator would continue to work collaboratively with the classroom teacher while developing his/her own training and mentoring skills. The programme was devised and delivered by Judy Hawker (former primary consultant in Brighton and Hove and governor at Westdene), supported by the Languages Support Programme Mentor as well as the head of department at Patcham High School.

As part of a whole-school approach to primary languages learning, session one supported teachers in creating a 'bilingual classroom' where French is used throughout the day for everyday routines, in a cross-curricular way, to reinforce what is being covered by the specialist teacher. This first session was delivered as a day in the classroom, and focused on generic language and appropriate vocabulary which can be used in a variety of situations. Teachers were taught and practised language through a range of games, songs, raps and activities, working in pairs with their coordinator. At the end of the session they were given a task which was to try out at least one activity the following week and be prepared to feed back their experience to the rest of the group.

Session two began with all participating teachers reporting positively on the range of activities they had tried in the classroom. Work then focused on the story. Teachers had agreed on a story based on an Amnesty International publication *L'agneau qui ne voulait pas être un mouton*. The main themes of the story include bullying and leadership as well as clear links to the Holocaust. The lead teachers for the project had simplified the story and developed related activities which supported progression in learners' listening, reading, writing and speaking skills as well as supporting cross-curricular links, in particular with PHSE, RE, literacy and history.

They worked on sound-spelling links to develop teachers' confidence in reading the story out loud as well as demonstrating activities that could be developed with learners. Teachers then read the story, rehearsed key vocabulary and practised using a variety of mimes devised by the group, with careful attention to sound-spelling links. They explored different approaches to developing reading and creative writing through the story. By the end of the second session, class teachers and coordinators had a range of strategies and resources to take back to school and use in delivering the story to their class.

Impact

The evaluations from the language improvement sessions were unanimously positive. Feedback following the first language improvement event showed that every teacher had used French in the classroom as part of their everyday practice and felt confident to do so. One teacher commented after the end of the second session that he felt *'inspired'* and *'could not wait to get back to the classroom to try some things out'*. Activities that teachers tried out included taking the register in French, language learning games, using French in numeracy and using French for assessment comments; one teacher reported in her evaluation that the course *'had made her think differently about the day'*.

For the storytelling, teachers were enthused by the possibilities of the story and reported that they now felt confident to work on the story with their class.

A few weeks later, the impact of this approach to language improvement was still being felt, involving both coordinators and class teachers through an authentic story. There is a general feeling that learners are more engaged and that there are lots of opportunities for cross-curricular work, which has further supported the involvement of the class teacher. There has been joint planning which included links with literacy and PHSE (anti-bullying week) and class teachers were confident to reinforce their language teaching through practising key language with actions.

One Year 4 pupil on his poster for anti-bullying week actually wrote *'Don't be a sheep!'* showing that the use of the French story had had real cross-curricular impact.

Contact details

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http://westdene.brighton-hove.dbprimary.com/brighton-hove/primary/westdene

4 Language improvement for primary teachers of languages (The Wroxham Transformative Learning Alliance)

Teaching school alliance:	**The Wroxham Transformative Learning Alliance**
Teaching school:	**The Wroxham School**
Schools involved:	Brookmans Park Primary School Cranborne Primary School Dame Alice Owen's School Little Heath Primary School Northaw Primary School Oakmere Primary School Pope Paul Primary School St Giles C of E Primary School The Wroxham School

Context

This Transformative Learning Alliance (TLA) is committed to improving primary teachers' confidence in the use of the target language. The TLA recognises that if the primary schools are to offer their pupils a challenging and rigorous programme throughout the four years of Key Stage 2, then those involved in teaching the new language need to be proficient and confident in their use of the target language. The Teaching School has therefore designed a French language improvement course for primary teachers, which is based on common thematic areas and will develop into an online helpdesk in the very near future.

Description

The course has been specifically designed to meet the needs of the participants. Six teachers from five alliance schools signed up for the course. The first session focused on the basics needed by any Key Stage 2 teacher teaching French for the first time and included greetings, numbers and colours. Subsequent sessions were designed by the course participants and included different linguistic elements such as weather, Christmas etc.

The course runs fortnightly after school and each session lasts an hour, plus up to half an hour for networking. The TLA ethos is very inclusive and all primary teachers are encouraged to attend every session. The newly appointed Specialist Leader of Education (SLE) for languages from a secondary school within the TLA leads the training.

As well as receiving language tuition throughout the course, participants leave each session with a resources pack which they are actively encouraged to use in their own classrooms.

At the end of each session, teachers' evaluations and suggestions are noted and this information is taken into account when planning or adapting the content of future sessions. Furthermore, participants are asked to commit to trialling some of the resources and activities in their own classroom. For example, during one particular session, teachers learnt or revised the months of the year. They then took part in a number of activities they could use with their pupils e.g. a flashcard sorting activity, a survey linked to birthdays and reading a poem in the target language. One teacher (who said at the beginning of the session that she lacked the confidence and subject knowledge to teach any French at all) was empowered to plan and carry out a lesson using the activities and resources with her class. This was a fantastic boost to her confidence and she came to the next session eager for more.

For teachers who have participated in the language improvement course and would like further support, an online helpdesk is also being developed and will be hosted on the TLA website. The helpdesk will be managed by the SLE along with colleagues from the other secondary school language departments in the TLA. The helpdesk will support primary teachers with language-based enquiries: grammar, pronunciation, etc., as well as directing practitioners to exciting resources and ideas for the classroom.

Impact

Primary teachers who have participated in the course already report that they are now much more confident in teaching languages to pupils at Key Stage 2. They leave each session tired, but excited and motivated.

100% of evaluation forms stated that either the teachers had used ideas from previous sessions in the classroom, or they would take ideas from that particular session to use with their classes.

It is intended that this language improvement course will continue to be offered to teachers within the TLA, and an intermediate course will also be developed for those who wish to extend their language expertise. Through this language development programme, links between primary schools and the teaching school have strengthened and greater collaboration has been promoted.

The course materials and resources with detailed trainer notes will be published on the TLA website for any other teaching schools to access should they be considering offering a similar programme.

Contact details

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5 Language improvement for primary teachers of languages (The Medway Teaching School Alliance)

Teaching school alliance:	The Medway Teaching Schools Alliance
Teaching school:	Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School
Schools involved:	Abbey Court Special School Allhallows Primary School Brompton-Westbrook Primary School Cuxton Community Junior School Delce Junior School Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School

Context

Medway TSA is committed to improving primary teachers' confidence in the use of the target language and their ability to deliver languages as part of the primary curriculum. The local authority used to have a strong model of collaborative work across schools in the area but this declined when external funding ceased. The Languages Support Programme (LSP) has therefore offered an excellent opportunity to revive and extend the model and to share good practice. Together with an experienced languages teacher who has expertise in primary practice, the TSA has designed a course for teachers in participating primary schools.

Description

TSA colleagues analysed the results of the primary school audits conducted at the beginning of the LSP, and held an initial meeting involving senior leaders from some of the schools involved. They then devised a language improvement course with the overall aims of developing teachers' language skills and improving their confidence and competence to deliver French to their pupils. The course also aims to enable teachers to develop their knowledge of language pedagogy and methodology.

The training takes place over the academic year and consists of 15 one-hour twilight sessions. Participating teachers are also encouraged to spend additional time in private study and structured professional reflection.

The teaching school is used as the training base and over the six sessions in the autumn term there was an average of ten attendees from across the five schools involved. Participating teachers have a wide range of abilities and skills as well as various levels of experience of teaching French. The trainer therefore works hard to provide appropriate, differentiated tasks which meet individual linguistic needs. During the sessions different types of activities such as games and pair or group speaking tasks are modelled and practised. These have included *'dominos en ligne'* and 'blockbuster' games, and a card activity linking the first and second halves of a statement to include a verb and a noun. The group then discuss how an activity could be adapted for pupils in the classroom and used across a range of topics.

The trainer asks participating teachers to complete a short written evaluation at the end of each session and this information is used to adapt future sessions according to need. References to cross-curricular activities and themes such as literacy and numeracy are highlighted. All resources are made available to the teachers, either during the sessions or electronically, so that they can practise the language themselves and use the activities with their own pupils. The aim is also that they will share these resources and their newly developed expertise with colleagues in their own schools. Participating teachers were given a certificate of attendance at the end of the first term's sessions.

In addition to the face-to-face language improvement course, each school will receive one day's bespoke training organised for them on an individual basis according to their needs. These days might include observations, support with planning, looking at schemes of work etc. In this way colleagues will be able to address the specific needs of teachers in different schools. Following this input, the trainer will reshape future language improvement activities and guidance for the remaining twilight sessions.

A qualitative survey at the end of the programme will form the basis of future professional development planning for the TSA.

The TSA will share training materials on its website so that other colleagues will be able to access the language improvement course activities and resources. These materials will be accompanied by guidance to enable others to use and adapt them for their own context.

Impact

Teachers who have taken part in the programme have reported that they are pleased with the sessions and that they have indeed been confident enough to take examples of what they have learnt back into their own classrooms to use in primary language lessons. The anticipated impact is that pupils' performance in languages will ultimately improve and that there will be a more consistent approach to the teaching of French across the schools involved.

As a result of colleagues from different schools working and learning together, there will undoubtedly be stronger collaboration between all the schools in the programme. Colleagues have also welcomed the involvement of headteachers. The inter-school links established in the other LSP projects have facilitated further professional partnerships for those involved in this project, and best practice models are being shared, trialled and put into practice.

Contact details

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Caroline Heylen	Primary Languages Coordinator	Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School

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Languages for all

Languages for all

Special schools project: Learning Together

Ofsted's report on Modern Languages, *Achievement and challenge 2007-2010,* highlights examples of good practice in the teaching of languages to learners with special educational needs. This good practice was noted where resources were well-prepared and students were enthusiastic about language learning. The report refers to a wide range of activities including the use of mime, demonstration and digital recording to support learning. It considers how the curriculum could be developed to meet the particular needs of its students. In one example, Ofsted reported that *'Key Stage 3 students worked to the Key Stage 2 Framework for an hour a week with further teaching during the week and made good progress from their starting points. They worked in groups and much of their learning was personalised for their particular needs. The teachers used sign language and the students' home languages to support their development.'*

These comments demonstrate that strategies are in use in special schools which could be beneficial to language learning, both in special schools and in mainstream classes. With this in mind, the Learning Together project aimed to identify strategies for communication and interaction currently in use in special schools, and to explore how they could be applied to the teaching of languages to other pupils with special needs, either in mainstream or special schools.

During the project, teachers from special schools worked collaboratively to produce units of work catering for pupils working from P3 to National Curriculum level 2. These units are available in French and German and focus on greetings, buying something and going to a café. Other teachers worked to produce a pack to use with music from around the world, linking that music to sensory massage, with consistent actions to encourage recognition and anticipation. In one TSA, a list of useful resources was produced to support the teaching of languages in special schools.

This work has generated a great deal of interest, raising the profile of languages for pupils with additional needs. This is particularly important as the place of languages in a special school's curriculum is sometimes questioned. The work has provided professional support for the teachers involved, which in turn has been motivating and exciting, leading to a drive to produce materials to support other teachers in a similar context. The project has also allowed teachers to visit other special schools, which has provided invaluable, and possibly unique, professional development.

1 Learning Together

Teaching school alliance:	The Partnership Teaching School
Teaching school:	Fosse Way School/Fiveways School
Schools involved:	Fairmead School, Somerset Fiveways School, Somerset Fosse Way School, Bath and North East Somerset Penrose School, Somerset Selworthy School, Somerset Three Ways School, Bath and North East Somerset Wilson Stuart School, Birmingham

Context

The special schools in this project cater for a wide range of needs, including pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities (PMLD), complex medical needs, moderate and severe learning difficulties and high-attaining pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), some of whom have gone on to university. The project team consisted of a project lead, six teachers and one speech and language therapist from special schools.

The aims of the project were:

- to identify successful communication and interaction strategies in use in the special schools
- to consider how these can be used and adapted to support those teaching languages to pupils with additional needs in both mainstream and special schools.

Description

Some thought was given as to how information should be gathered during this project. It was agreed that pupil interviews were not appropriate, as many pupils were non-verbal, so classroom observations were chosen, along with the opportunity to look at lesson plans and teaching resources. Each participating teacher had the opportunity to visit another special school, writing a short report afterwards to document findings and reflections. The programme mentor also visited the schools so that findings could be collated easily.

The programme launch allowed relationships between the participants to be established before the visits took place, and proved to be invaluable as language teachers in special schools are often isolated and have little opportunity for networking or professional exchange.

School visits focused on the following agreed areas: display, facial expression/signing/gesture, use of objects, language being adapted to support understanding, technology and multi-sensory strategies. Behaviour management was not on the original list but was added later as it emerged as a significant feature during the visits.

All of these areas proved interesting to observe and consider in the light of language teaching. The consistent use of symbols and signing seemed to have, potentially, an invaluable role, as the symbols and signs provide a bridge between the words and comprehension. Once the symbols or signs are understood, they can be applied very usefully to any language, and can bypass the language where appropriate. An example from daily life might be the use of a petrol pump sign, which allows any driver to find fuel, regardless of whether they speak the local language.

Observing the use of technology provided interesting findings. The technology available in the schools varied considerably, although all were well-equipped. 'Talking' items such as talking buttons were used effectively to give non-verbal pupils a voice. These could be used to good effect in mainstream schools to help reluctant speakers as well as to provide models of pronunciation.

One noticeable feature of the observations was the extent to which pupils were encouraged to be as independent as possible, regardless of their disabilities. Providing opportunities for genuine choice was important in every setting, as this gives the pupils some control over their own life. In some cases this meant using pictures for pupils to choose which snack they would like; in another example, paint was placed slightly out of reach of the children to encourage them to verbalise which colour they would like.

There was some discussion around which language would be the most appropriate for pupils with additional needs. Although there was no consensus, there was agreement that schools needed to consider the following: sound-spelling links, phonemes which are easy for English native speakers to pronounce, and consistent grammatical rules.

Impact

As a result of the visits and a follow-up meeting, some teachers worked together to produce lesson plans in both French and German for teaching some basic language (greetings, shopping and going to a café) to pupils working from P3–8 levels and National Curriculum levels 1–2. In addition, another pair of teachers produced a pack of international music to be used for sensory massage, with certain actions associated with different styles of music to encourage recognition and anticipation.

These resources will be freely available and will be posted on the teaching school website so many pupils will be able to benefit from language lessons which are better tailored to their needs.

There is now a Specialist Leader of Education (SLE) in the teaching school alliance who will be working with the project lead to apply the findings beyond the scope of the project.

All the teachers involved in the project have reported how motivating it has been, meeting and working with other teachers from special schools with a love of languages. They now have a mutual support network and will continue to build on the work that has been started.

Contact details

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Leadership and management

Leadership and management

In Ofsted's report on Modern Languages, *Achievement and challenge 2007-2010*, it was noted that strong support and commitment to languages from a school's leadership team was pivotal to success. Outstanding provision had *'a very clear rationale for languages'* which was *'embedded in whole-school planning'*. Effective professional development included sharing good practice within departments and through local and wider networks. Where leadership was less effective, the provision and impact of training was variable, there was a lack of focus on learning and progress and a failure to plan for the most pressing needs and make improvements. While good leadership in primary and secondary schools was characterised by high-quality monitoring, review and evaluation, in many schools this remained a weakness, because leaders did not feel competent to observe and judge language provision.

The Languages Support Programme provided teaching school alliances (TSAs) with the opportunity to fulfil one of their key roles, that of identifying and developing leadership potential. All the projects provided opportunities for teachers to develop leadership skills: within primary languages teams, as secondary subject leaders, in local and national networks and as Specialist Leaders of Education (SLEs). Languages SLEs and programme leaders have developed their strategic and practical role, managing complex projects often involving several schools, establishing new curriculum models and inspiring colleagues. In one TSA, a subject leader toolkit was produced to support new and existing subject leaders, with potential for use in other subject areas as well as in languages. Many projects have enabled current and aspiring senior managers and headteachers to gain a clearer understanding of languages skills, pedagogy and good practice in order to be more knowledgeable and confident line managers of languages departments.

The process of project management has been invaluable in developing interpersonal and organisational skills in all those involved. As well as SLEs, many classroom teachers have had the opportunity to take on leadership roles, and have extended the scope of their own professional development. Action research projects have stretched and motivated teachers, and the role of the teacher as trainer has been a major development in many TSAs. In this section, read in more detail about some of the projects in which good leadership and management have flourished.

1

Building capacity and capability by identifying and nurturing potential Specialist Leaders of Education for Languages

Teaching school alliance:	Arthur Terry Teaching School Alliance
Teaching school:	Arthur Terry School
Schools involved:	Arthur Terry School Broadway School CTC Kingshurst Academy Dosthill Primary School Erasmus Darwin Academy Greysbrooke Primary School Hamstead Hall School Hill West Primary School Little Sutton Primary School Mere Green Primary School St Michael's C of E Primary Wilson Stuart School

Context

The Arthur Terry Teaching School Alliance (TSA) is a partnership of 22 schools in Birmingham, South Staffordshire and Warwickshire. Across such a wide geographical area there are schools of varying contexts, which all share a common goal of continuous school improvement through collaboration. The TSA has appointed 12 Specialist Leaders of Education (SLEs) but does not currently have a Languages SLE. The identification of potential Languages SLEs – and the subsequent appointment of both primary and secondary Languages SLEs – is regarded as a key priority to achieve self-sustaining school improvement within the TSA.

Description

A strategic approach was adopted by the TSA to identify, nurture and coach potential Languages SLEs, so that they could develop the necessary skills to help other language leaders.

Following a languages audit, participating schools were invited to send lead language teachers to the first meeting of the Languages Network, where four key projects were agreed. These projects addressed the needs identified in the audit as well as responding to some of the key challenges and recommendations of the Ofsted report on Modern Languages, *Achievement and challenge 2007-2010.*

The projects were:

1. Language improvement for primary class teachers (LIP)
2. Improving the 'language learning journey' by improving transition between the primary and secondary phases
3. Raising expectations: developing extended and creative writing at Key Stage 3
4. 'Real talk': developing teachers' skills to facilitate spontaneous talk

These projects are being co-led by lead language teachers whose particular strengths were identified in the audit, creating a sustainable structure based around school to school support. A key element of this approach has been to incorporate the principles of a lesson study model, which involves teachers observing and feeding back in an unfamiliar school. Focused training was provided to develop the coaching, mentoring and leadership skills of participating teachers, and support provided by the assistant headteacher/SLE at Arthur Terry and the LSP Mentor.

Lead language teachers have had an opportunity to participate in inter-TSA professional training events, securing their understanding of what constitutes 'outstanding' in languages. They have developed the ability and confidence to articulate this to other teachers within and across schools. For example, some colleagues are consulting with literacy leaders to understand how grammatical concepts are explicitly taught in other areas, and to develop the role of language teachers in leading whole-school curriculum and training initiatives.

The lead language teachers of the cross-phase projects have been working very closely with primary practitioners to grow their leadership capacity so that they are in a position to support other primary schools preparing for the implementation of statutory primary languages from 2014. A good example of this sustainable approach was a training package for primary colleagues to improve their own confidence and competence in the target language as well as their skills in good classroom practice. The LIP lead coached and mentored a higher level teaching assistant (HTLA) in one of the primary schools, enabling her to develop the skills and confidence to run language improvement training for other local primary schools later in the year.

It is envisaged that on completion of Phase 1 of the LSP, participating lead teachers will be encouraged to apply for the role of Languages SLE, so that the Languages Network can be sustained and the capacity of the TSA to support and develop languages education secured.

Impact

Several potential SLEs have been identified, at least two of whom are in the primary sector. These colleagues have already gained significant experience and understanding of the challenges involved in developing others, planning projects and securing impact. Their role has been supported by coaching and mentoring. Many have been superb in leading and managing projects, although some have found working with other schools more challenging.

The projects have enabled them to develop the following skills:

- Strong communication and interpersonal skills
- The ability to use high levels of emotional intelligence to work sensitively and collaboratively with colleagues
- An understanding of what constitutes 'outstanding' in languages and the ability and confidence to articulate this
- An appreciation of how languages can contribute to the wider school improvement agenda
- An analytical approach to identifying needs
- The ability to prioritise according to need, and to establish new and innovative working practices
- The ability to grow leadership capacity in others.

The assistant headteacher leading the LSP has enhanced her coaching and mentoring skills and her ability to identify and develop leadership potential. She has developed a more strategic role across the TSA. In order to provide more focused coaching support she will be team-teaching Year 6 French in a local primary school.

The TSA has secured a collaborative, innovative approach to developing outstanding language educators. This will ensure that it is in a strong position to provide cost-effective, robust support for the implementation of the new National Curriculum for Languages, to support a potential increase in the take-up of languages at Key Stage 4 and the implementation of statutory languages at Key Stage 2.

Contact details

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2

Increasing the confidence and linguistic skills of good to outstanding primary class teachers in teaching Modern Languages

Teaching school alliance:	**Bishop's Stortford Teaching School Alliance (Catalyst)**
Teaching school:	**Bishop's Stortford High School**
Schools involved:	Birchwood High School Bishop's Stortford High School Furneux Pelham C of E School Little Hadham Primary School Summer Croft Primary School Thorngrove Primary School Windhill Primary School

Context

Bishop's Stortford TSA has established a cross-phase Language Development Network (LDN) to build the capacity and capability of the TSA to support languages education in the local area and beyond. The LDN is led by Kate Beaumont, Headteacher of Windhill Primary School and a former primary languages consultant in Hertfordshire. She believes that primary headteachers should be taking the initiative and responsibility for developing language teaching at Key Stage 2. A key development for the TSA in 2012/13 has been the establishment of a Language Improvement Programme for primary class teachers.

Description

The Language Improvement Programme (LIP) aims to improve the linguistic skills and confidence of non-specialist good to outstanding primary class teachers in order to enable them to support the teaching of languages more effectively at Key Stage 2. The LIP is coordinated by Liz Stockley, headteacher of Little Hadham Primary School, a French and Drama specialist who is passionate about embedding languages within the primary curriculum and empowering class teachers to take over the teaching of languages. Caroline Davis, Head of Languages at Birchwood School, is leading the language improvement workshops supported by her languages team, providing a strong cross-phase approach to continuing professional development (CPD).

Headteachers were asked to identify two confident 'good' or 'outstanding' primary practitioners to be enrolled onto the LIP, so that they could act as 'language champions' in their schools and improve the sustainability of languages provision. The attendance of two teachers from each school was seen to be essential to maximise peer support and dialogue. In order to facilitate maximum participation and minimum disruption to schools it was decided to run the course over two terms, commencing with an intensive whole-day session followed by three twilight sessions.

Participants in the LIP completed an entry questionnaire and the programme was tailored to meet their needs by a small cross-phase working group. At the same time an audit of resources was conducted across the schools to ensure that the participating teachers would have a range of resources and a common framework to support them, so that they could build what they had learnt into their language teaching between sessions.

Key elements of the programme included: a focus on phonics, extending the use of interactive target language, developing questioning and giving simple opinions, understanding and applying basic grammar including creating simple sentences, improving use of high-frequency verbs, connectives and negatives. The cross-phase planning team has met between sessions to review evaluations and to tailor each session accordingly, so that primary teachers are provided with a wealth of techniques which they can use in the classroom. To help embed French within the day-to-day primary school routine, a bank of common classroom phrases has been devised and the weekly dinner menu has been translated into French. Course participants have been provided with a range of resources and ideas from the sessions to enable them to put into practice what has been learnt.

Headteachers and senior staff have also played a key role in the LIP by conducting learning walks in between workshops to encourage and support the teachers participating in the programme. They have also provided opportunities for the 'learning champions' to share their learning with other classroom teachers. It is envisaged that the LIP will be repeated with a further cohort of teachers within the TSA to embed and consolidate learning and to provide further intensive CPD for other classroom teachers. The headteacher programme lead and project lead also intend to share this model with other headteachers locally.

Impact

This project has had a significant impact on teachers, senior leaders and pupils within the TSA. Primary teachers have benefited from high-quality, engaging professional development, which has led to improved confidence and proficiency both in terms of their specialist language knowledge and their understanding of effective language learning. Most significantly they all reported feeling more confident to teach languages; they had extended the range of resources and activities in their language lessons and have had an opportunity to share their learning with colleagues in school. There is real long-term sustainability here in terms of building a language learning culture within and across schools.

As the participating teachers have immediately implemented the language skills and strategies they have gained through the LIP into their languages teaching, this has had an immediate impact on their pupils. Headteachers conducting learning walks have reported improved enthusiasm and enjoyment of language learning, and observed that Year 6 pupils were beginning to apply simple grammatical rules to form basic sentences. They also noted that use of gesture and mime has had a very positive impact on pupils' memorisation, learning and engagement.

Senior leaders have been crucial in driving this programme. This has in turn ensured that they have developed a deeper knowledge and understanding of languages education and will be well placed to act as headteacher ambassadors/champions to support the introduction of compulsory primary languages from September 2014 within their TSA and beyond.

Contact details

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3 Subject leader's toolkit

Teaching school alliance:	Cultivus Teaching School Alliance
Teaching school:	Elmridge Primary School
Schools involved:	Acre Hall Primary School Elmridge Primary School Moss Park Junior School Springwood Special Primary School St Stephen's RC Junior School

Context

This TSA recognises that in preparation for the introduction of languages at Key Stage 2 in September 2014, primary subject leaders will play a key role in curriculum innovation. With this in mind, a working party was formed from a cross-section of subject leaders in five primary schools, including a special school, to produce a toolkit to support new and existing subject leaders. Whatever their level of experience, this toolkit offers strategic and practical advice to subject leaders and provides a valuable management tool. The toolkit also has generic subject leadership applications.

Description

An initial audit of participating subject leaders showed a wide range of leadership experience and of linguistic competence, which ranged from beginner to fluent. The audit identified areas of confidence as well as particular areas where support was required. Participants also listed the strengths they could bring to the group. The ultimate aim of the project was to strengthen the vital strategic role of subject leaders, so the toolkit would need to provide guidance relevant to the whole range of experience, strengths and needs expressed in the audit.

The Languages Support Programme (LSP) provided the context to fund the working party meetings, thus giving participants quality time to meet during the working day. Teachers felt that this added value to what they were trying to achieve. Subject leaders met for the first time in October 2012 to feed back the findings of the audit and to compile a list of initial ideas as to what should be included in the toolkit. Then, an action plan of tasks to be completed before the next meeting was drawn up and teachers opted for areas where they felt they could make a worthwhile contribution.

A month later, a further meeting was held and subject leaders reported on their progress, communicated their findings and ideas and shared their contributions. This session produced a wealth of relevant materials, based on whole-school provision and involvement. Materials included guidance on auditing, action planning, writing a policy, curriculum mapping, progression, assessment, monitoring and evaluating impact, resources, international links and transition, with specific advice for the special school context. Many areas identified by Ofsted as those in which effective leadership could have a positive impact were represented and addressed. Among these are:

- Strong support from senior management and governors, with languages forming an integral part of school management systems
- The merging of policy and practice with effective use of national frameworks and guidance plus high-quality resources including ICT
- Whole-school involvement in developing and embedding languages.

Next steps were agreed and participants again went away to work independently, having arranged to meet in January 2013 in two smaller, more efficient working groups, to look at two areas which needed more exploration, namely curriculum mapping and assessment, and resources.

Once all contributions were in, the toolkit was professionally formatted in a coherent, editable version for online publication on the TSA website. In addition, a closed online forum for subject leaders was set up to provide a further support network where use could be monitored and feedback provided. The toolkit will also be shared more widely via other TSA events in the course of the year.

The working party has agreed to meet for the first major revision of the toolkit during 2013-14 in final preparation for statutory orders at Key Stage 2.

Impact

Participating subject leaders report that in creating the toolkit, their awareness of all areas of primary languages has been enhanced. This will enable them to lead their subject more confidently and effectively. They also note that this collaborative method of working is a highly effective way of both stimulating and pooling ideas and experience.

They have commented during discussion that many aspects of the toolkit are transferable to other subjects and that the leadership skills developed are generic. This project has therefore provided them with a valuable continuing professional development (CPD) opportunity to help them progress towards middle management.

Their involvement has given them a management tool to support the development of languages in their school and help them manage more effectively. Indeed participating schools are using it as part of their CPD provision for teachers.

They understand that leading languages in school, in preparation for the introduction of languages at Key Stage 2 in 2014, will require a more structured approach and that because this is an initiative at primary level, the emphasis has to be on leadership rather than coordination. This will help to give languages the same status as other subjects in the primary curriculum.

The fact that the toolkit is an online editable document means that it will be able to reflect the evolving role of the languages subject leader and be updated to include both local and national developments. As well as offering ongoing support, the online closed forum will aid the process of reflection and respond to changing needs.

Contact details

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4 Spanish Leading Lights

Teaching school alliance:	Torbay Teaching School Alliance
Teaching school:	Oldway Primary School
Schools involved:	Brixham C of E Primary School Churston Grammar Academy Eden Park Academy Galmpton Primary School Oldway Primary School Shiphay Academy White Rock Primary School

Context

All the primary schools involved in this project are located in Torbay, and all teach Spanish. There were existing links with schools in Peru, and also strong links with the local secondary state grammar school, whose Languages Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) had very good relationships with the primary schools. The lead school in the alliance has an excellent track record in action research, and chose to benefit from this programme to explore an innovative approach to leadership at all levels. The AST worked closely with one of the primary teachers, who speaks Spanish, to develop a multi-faceted model of pupil leadership.

Description

The project was directed by the Teaching School Lead, but run by the AST from the secondary school and the primary school teacher who speaks Spanish. They are all based in different schools, so this in itself took commitment and efficiency on all sides.

The AST worked intensively with a group of fifteen sixth-form students, following the 'language leaders' model. These students worked through their lunchtimes to learn teaching and leadership skills, and to plan the workshop days, looking at how Spanish can be broken down and communicated for the best possible learning.

Three children from each of Years 4, 5, and 6 were chosen in each of the six primary schools, making 18 pupils from each year group in total. The year groups spent a day at the secondary school every six school weeks or so (a total of five across the academic year), being taught Spanish by the sixth-form students, supervised by the primary teacher and from time to time by the AST. The days included a variety of activities to support and reinforce the learning; and time was allocated for the children to work together developing activities for their classmates. After each workshop, the primary pupils went back to school and taught the Spanish they had learnt to their own classes and teachers.

The dynamics of each triad of children was carefully considered, with each group ideally comprising one able linguist, one confident, outgoing child and one well-organised child. Of course some children had more than one of these qualities.

Each series of workshops started with Year 4, then more challenging activities were included for the Year 5 day, and even more challenging activities for the Year 6 day, even though the content area of the language remained the same: commands, greetings, school items, food and drink, aspects of culture, etc.

The idea of a joint Peruvian/Devonian cookbook has also been realised, which has brought schools into closer working relationships with a common aim and in a very collaborative context.

Alongside the workshops, Spanish lessons were offered to the primary teachers, and these have been extended to include parents.

The second phase of this project is a peer observation model based on Japanese lesson study. Three teachers work together to identify next steps for a group of pupils or class, then they meet to plan and prepare a lesson to address the agreed objective. One teacher teaches the lesson, observed by the others. After the lesson, the teachers meet and evaluate the lesson together, adapt the lesson plan, then the lesson is taught by the second teacher. The process is repeated so the teachers refine the lesson together and reflect on their teaching and the pupils' learning. This TSA has already researched this method with great success and was keen to develop it for the teaching of Spanish in Key Stage 2. This second phase began in January 2013 so is still in progress.

Impact

Leadership and management have been developed effectively at all levels:

School Leadership Team (SLT): Teaching School Lead working with AST and primary teacher.

Primary teachers: the Spanish-speaking primary teacher has taken on a new role of leading the project, liaising with headteachers and teaching colleagues from the other schools as well as managing the complex practicalities of this project. She has also started teaching Spanish to the primary teachers participating in the project and has opened this up to parents.

Class teachers managing lessons taught by their children; teachers collaborating to manage their own learning of Spanish and their roles as potential teachers of Spanish in their primary schools.

Primary school pupils: children going back to school to teach their classmates and teachers.

Sixth form: AST working with sixth-form students; sixth-form students teaching primary children.

The project is going from strength to strength, and future plans include a Young Master Chef Cook-Off, drawing on pupils from all research schools, with the collaboration of a local Spanish chef.

The lead primary teacher reported: *'This is the first experience I have had of leading a subject across more than one school... I feel honoured that I have been given the chance to lead such an innovative project and have been lucky to have great feedback from all the schools involved. It was a role that I would not have considered myself taking a few years ago, but I have been inspired to take the learning of both teachers and students forward.'*

Contact details

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Angela Forster	Year 1 Class Teacher	White Rock Primary School

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5

Improving the teaching of primary languages in Shepway schools

Teaching school alliance:	**Shepway Teaching Schools**
Teaching school:	**Sandgate Primary School**
Schools involved:	Elham Primary School Harcourt Primary School Hawkinge Primary School Mundella Primary School Palmarsh Primary School Saltwood Primary School Sandgate Primary School Seabrook Primary School Shepway Primary School

Context

Shepway is committed to improving primary languages provision across the alliance through developing primary leadership. The TSA decided therefore to develop the leadership, mentoring and coaching skills of the core primary languages team (primary coordinators of four schools with excellent primary provision) through leading networks and school-to-school support so that these teachers would then have the skills and confidence to work with other schools and develop languages provision further. This includes delivering language improvement courses for Spanish and French open to all schools in the alliance, as well as a session on teaching languages at the first NQT conference in September.

Description

To improve the confidence and competence of classroom teachers in delivering primary languages, two lead teachers delivered a five-week twilight language improvement course for primary teachers in both French and Spanish. One of the lead teachers also delivered a language improvement session in French to 34 Shepway primary NQTs at their induction conference.

The content of the twilight sessions covered: the alphabet, greetings, name, age, time, simple structures, verbs, colours and animals, asking and responding to questions with an emphasis on good pronunciation. The content was taught to teachers through games, songs, role-play, plenty of oral practice and an additional emphasis on intercultural understanding. The aim of the sessions was to develop the confidence of participants and to have fun learning a new language so that they felt happy to trial activities every week with their classes. They were given resources and ideas that could be used immediately and were strongly encouraged to trial as much as possible and feed back at the beginning of each session on their progress.

At the end of the two courses, participants were asked to plan their next steps. At the lead teachers' own schools, this would involve ongoing coaching, modelling, joint planning and observation. Teachers at other schools would be able to access school-to-school support, as well as help and advice from the network. In fact one supported school newly delivering Spanish has requested whole-school language improvement as part of this programme. Overall teachers listed a range of ways in which they intended to build on this learning experience, including regular practice, exploring the resources available, keeping up confidence and incorporating more Spanish or French classroom vocabulary into their general teaching, as well as implementing more of the strategies in class.

A lively hour slot at the NQT conference ensured that new teachers got a real flavour of primary languages and an opportunity to try out activities and join in with the language. This was an inspiring way for these teachers to have an introduction to primary languages and as well as new-found confidence, they finished the session with two free fly swats and the following top ten tips:

- Good teacher = good language teacher (the same pedagogy applies)
- Use a range of teaching strategies and activities
- Be prepared
- Model yourself as a learner
- Focus on speaking and listening first; then reading and writing
- Create a safe atmosphere where it is okay to make mistakes
- Make your lessons as interactive as possible
- Use the target language
- Little and often
- Have fun!

Impact

The evaluations from the language improvement sessions were unanimously positive and have resulted in classroom teachers continuing to deliver language activities and lessons after the course. Ongoing observation of practice in schools has shown an increase in the confidence of class teachers in delivering primary languages with the support of the primary languages coordinator and the team. Evaluations from the French course included comments about understanding the importance of intercultural understanding, developing reading and writing as well as speaking and listening, and learning sound-spelling links to support pronunciation.

'My confidence has grown significantly and, as a result, the quality of my French teaching has improved. I now have a new-found confidence in languages and, although I am not fluent, I feel comfortable teaching French and enjoy it now.'

Through these projects, the four core members of the primary languages team have developed their leadership skills by leading network meetings, leading language improvement training and providing school-to-school support. One teacher has already successfully applied to become an SLE and the other three will follow. This model follows the philosophy of the TSA which aims to create support systems for leaders and practitioners who are developing and sharing best practice across a range of areas. In this way they are enabled to support, coach and mentor others. As a result, there is a structure of shared leadership and a sustainable and replicable model for any project.

Contact details

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6 Developing the strategic leadership and management of Modern Languages

Teaching school alliance:	**Haybridge and Stourport Teaching School Alliance**
Teaching school:	**Haybridge High School and Sixth Form / The Stourport High School and VIth Form Centre**
Schools involved:	Baxter College Bewdley High School Haybridge High School and Sixth Form King Charles I School Kingsley College (Redditch) Lickhill Primary School St Bartholomew's C of E Primary School The Chantry School The Stourport High School and VIth Form Centre Wilden Primary School

Context

The Stourport High School and Haybridge High School Teaching School Alliance is a job-share TSA located in Worcestershire, bringing together local secondary and primary schools to *'raise the game for all children through school-to-school improvement and high-quality collaboration'*. Stourport has been designated a Lead School for Languages and has appointed two Languages SLEs, in order to build the capacity within the TSA to develop and extend languages education through cross-phase collaboration.

Description

Following a languages audit and subsequent discussions with senior leaders in participating schools, the TSA focused on developing the strategic leadership and management of modern languages. With the increasing prominence of languages in the curriculum, the possibility of the English Baccalaureate and the introduction of statutory languages at Key Stage 2 from 2014, it was felt that senior leaders should be more closely involved in languages education, so that they are well placed to make informed strategic decisions.

The project focused on engaging leaders at all levels, and ensuring that they are well informed about language learning and its contribution to the curriculum. There was an emphasis on what high-quality language learning looks like, the challenges facing language teachers and how they can be supported to ensure that students develop the necessary linguistic and intercultural skills to become 21st century global citizens.

One focus of the project was observing specialist language lessons and developing effective joint observation techniques. Another was on recognising and fostering good practice in languages, and increasing knowledge and understanding of how language learning can drive up overall standards.

Paired observations were carried out by senior leaders and language specialists. A video clip package *Modern Languages in Action* was developed to exemplify languages pedagogy, skills and standards. The action research strand of the project was undertaken by the SLE, who researched the role of non-specialist senior leaders with responsibility for languages in schools. This research found that there is a need to provide high-quality training for non-specialist senior leaders, and that a 'senior leaders' toolkit for languages' would be of great benefit, containing: case studies of outstanding language practice, sample policies, exemplar students' essays, Ofsted grade descriptors for languages and exemplification of standards. The action research report can be accessed via the TSA's website.

A second conference on developing a coherent cross-phase languages curriculum is planned for April 2013. The next stage of the project will be to draw together a focus group of senior leaders and language specialists who will share the project outcomes and produce a 'Senior Leaders' Handbook' to support senior leadership teams in other schools.

Impact

Participants have reported the following evidence of impact in their evaluations and interim project feedback:

- *'Raised the profile of MFL amongst senior leadership teams'*
- *'Better understanding of how MFL can underpin literacy across the school, aids Spiritual Moral Social and Cultural (SMSC) education, contributes to teaching and learning and the wider school community'*
- *'Improved the skillset of senior leaders, lesson observations and judgements with greater assuredness'*
- *'Better understanding of the role of target language and its importance in MFL teaching'*
- *'Improved understanding of what good and outstanding progress looks like in languages'*
- *'Senior leaders and Heads of Department given opportunities to reflect on own practice and management'*
- *'Sharpened strategic visions in MFL departments'*
- *'MFL leaders and Senior Leadership Team able to intervene more swiftly and plan for targeted support'*

A number of schools have carried out paired observations using the Ofsted Supplementary Subject Specific Guidance and this has resulted in improved observation skills and better informed judgements, enabling them to provide better support and challenge to heads of languages.

Assistant headteacher Dave Potts at Stourport High reports:

'I now feel far more confident in making judgements about what good and outstanding looks like. However I also recognise the importance of continuing joint lesson observations with a linguist to enable me to develop skill and understanding as well as support the drive for continued improvement in standards.'

Contact details

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Liz Quinn	Principal	The Stourport High School and VIth Form Centre
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http://www.school-portal.co.uk/GroupHomepage.asp?GroupID=1096137

7

Collaborative working: how to establish mutually beneficial links with other schools to improve language teaching and learning

Teaching school alliance:	**Tudor Grange Academy, Solihull (TGAS)**
Teaching school:	**Tudor Grange Academy**
Schools involved:	Great Alne Primary School Light Hall School Monkspath Primary School Oak Cottage Primary School Samworth Church Academy St Alphege Primary School St James Primary School Tudor Grange Academy, Solihull Tudor Grange Academy, Worcester

Context

Tudor Grange Academy has an established Best Practice Languages Programme which is at the heart of collaborative working, enabling both teachers and students to work together to share best practice and improve language teaching and learning. The publication of the new Draft Programmes of Study for Languages provides a renewed imperative and a key opportunity to work collaboratively to offer a coherent and engaging cross-phase language learning experience.

Description

The Best Practice Languages Programme encompasses a number of face-to face and virtual approaches to collaborative working for both teachers and students.

The following three areas for collaboration have been developed around the needs identified in a TSA baseline audit completed by participating schools:

Encouraging spontaneous talk and running an inter-school live speaking event

Teachers from four secondary schools collaborated on developing effective strategies to encourage spontaneous talk and extend opportunities for students to use the target language for 'real' communication. The programme commenced with two Best Practice in Speaking Skills days, where teachers shared their current practice and considered current thinking. On the second of these days, schools shared examples of the most effective strategies and resources they had trialled. These will be published as a *Partnership Speaking Skills Toolkit* on the TSA website. The teachers subsequently planned and ran two inter-school live speaking events involving Key Stage 3 students. These events provided an important opportunity for students to move out of their comfort zones and apply their languages skills in a 'real' context beyond the classroom.

Creating a cross-phase Key Stage 2–3 scheme of work and running a cross-phase inter-school languages event

Primary and secondary teachers collaborated on the development of a coherent cross-phase framework for Spanish, adapting schemes of work to improve progression in all four skills and grammar. One of the units was then trialled with Year 6. Reciprocal observations have supported understanding of Key Stage 2/3 methodology, and this has paved the way for a more informed approach to cross-phase curriculum development. A Year 6/7 Language Challenge Day

has been jointly planned for the summer term, providing an opportunity for Year 6 pupils to gain confidence and apply their language skills, while Year 7 students act as language leaders and consolidate their own learning. The Year 7 curriculum has been modified to better accommodate the skills and experiences primary pupils bring with them, and greater challenge has been built into the revised scheme of work.

Language improvement for primary class teachers

This strand encompasses inter-primary/cross-phase collaboration and used a collaborative coaching model to build the capacity of primary lead language teachers to train non-specialist classroom teachers. The secondary project leader devised and delivered a tailor-made Language Improvement Programme (LIP) to suit the stated needs of the primary schools. Emphasis has been placed on developing confidence and competence, including a particular focus on basic grammar, phonics, classroom language and planning for progression across four skill areas. Primary schools are now collaborating on developing units of work and resources which will be shared via the cross-phase languages group and the TSA website. A programme of inter-school peer observation has been planned for the summer term.

Impact

The projects have had a significant impact on teachers and learners. Good practice has been shared and language teaching and learning improved through high-quality professional development. Most importantly, it has created sustainable professional relationships and partnerships which will be essential in supporting the coherent implementation of the revised National Curriculum and the introduction of compulsory primary languages. These partnerships will also ensure that secondary schools are able to build on the foundations laid at Key Stage 2 and improve outcomes at GCSE and A level. Teachers and pupils involved in the programme report the following:

- Improved consistency across language departments
- Deepening of teachers' professional knowledge
- Good practice shared and embedded across language departments
- Increased liaison between primary and secondary school, bringing greater coherence and continuity to language learning
- Improved planning for progress across all four skills at Key Stage 2
- Improved confidence and proficiency of primary language teachers
- Higher expectations of teachers at primary and secondary level
- Improved understanding of Key Stage 2/3 methodology
- Greater awareness of transition issues
- Improved ability of teachers to support and encourage spontaneous talk
- Improved opportunities for pupils to apply language skills in real-life situations
- Pupils increasingly using the target language to communicate with the teacher and with peers in and beyond the classroom
- Year 7 curriculum adapted to build on, and exploit, the increasing amount of work being undertaken in the primary schools
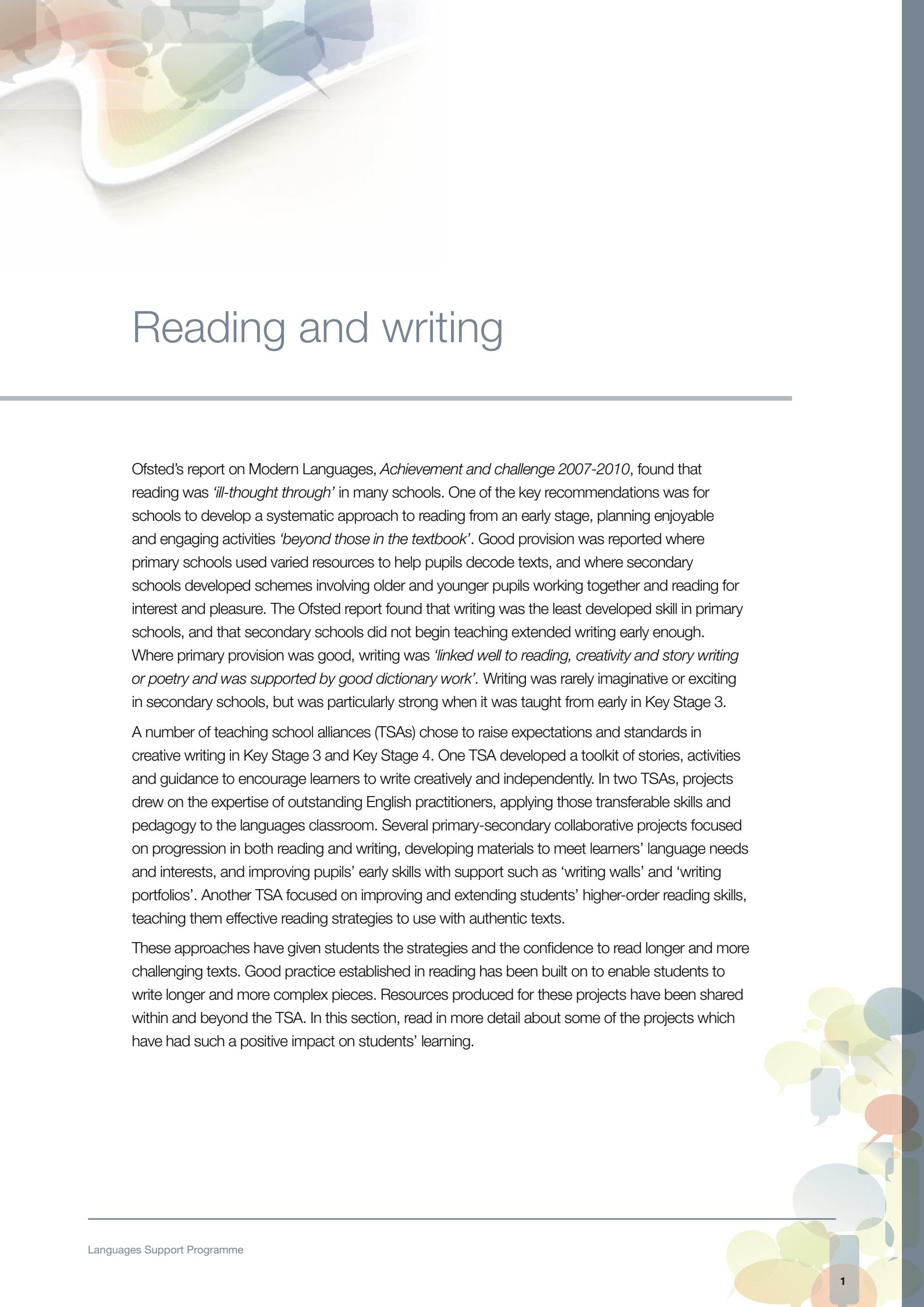- A sustainable partnership project model established.

Contact details

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Reading and writing
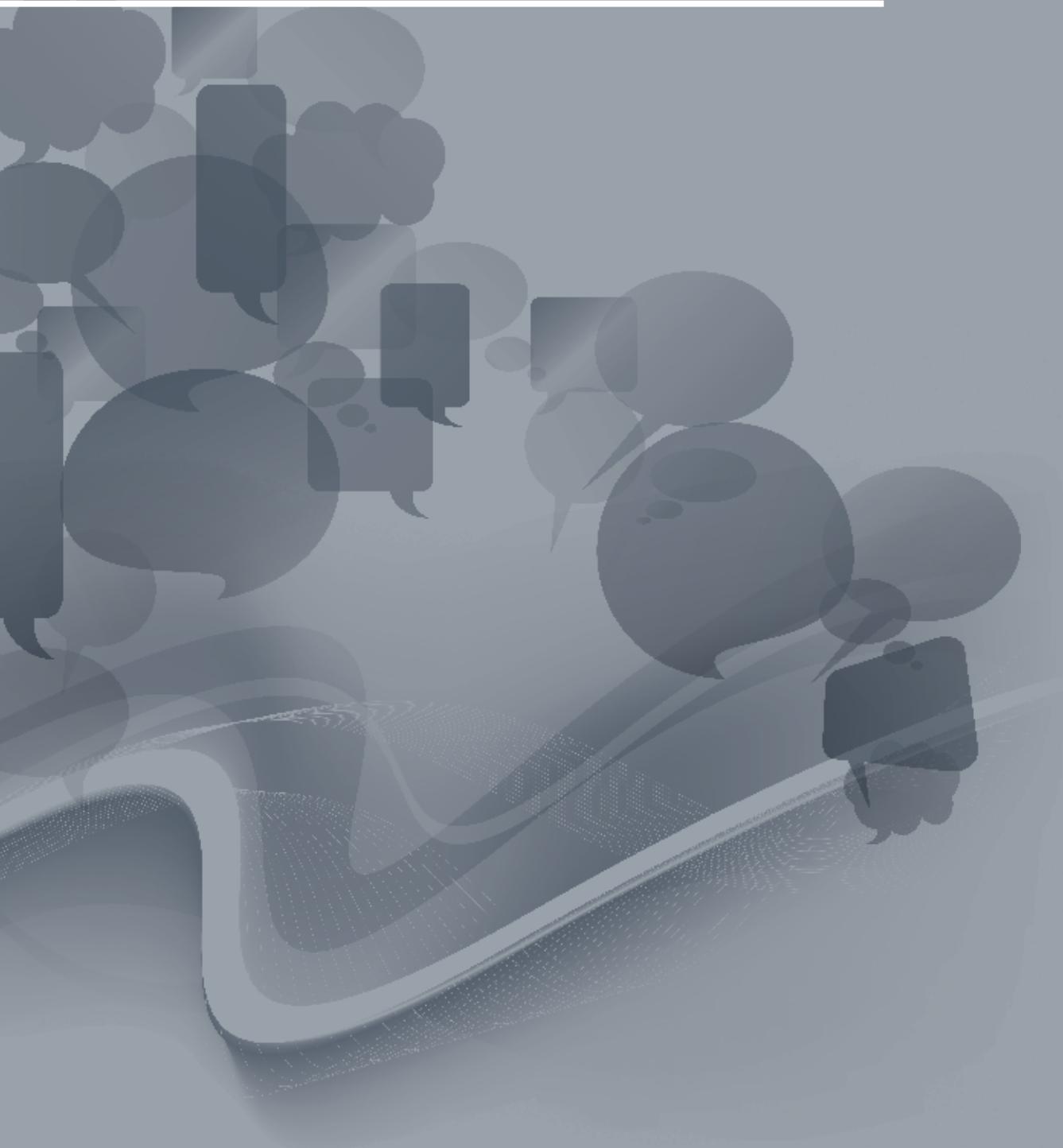
Reading and writing

Ofsted's report on Modern Languages, *Achievement and challenge 2007-2010*, found that reading was *'ill-thought through'* in many schools. One of the key recommendations was for schools to develop a systematic approach to reading from an early stage, planning enjoyable and engaging activities *'beyond those in the textbook'*. Good provision was reported where primary schools used varied resources to help pupils decode texts, and where secondary schools developed schemes involving older and younger pupils working together and reading for interest and pleasure. The Ofsted report found that writing was the least developed skill in primary schools, and that secondary schools did not begin teaching extended writing early enough. Where primary provision was good, writing was *'linked well to reading, creativity and story writing or poetry and was supported by good dictionary work'.* Writing was rarely imaginative or exciting in secondary schools, but was particularly strong when it was taught from early in Key Stage 3.

A number of teaching school alliances (TSAs) chose to raise expectations and standards in creative writing in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. One TSA developed a toolkit of stories, activities and guidance to encourage learners to write creatively and independently. In two TSAs, projects drew on the expertise of outstanding English practitioners, applying those transferable skills and pedagogy to the languages classroom. Several primary-secondary collaborative projects focused on progression in both reading and writing, developing materials to meet learners' language needs and interests, and improving pupils' early skills with support such as 'writing walls' and 'writing portfolios'. Another TSA focused on improving and extending students' higher-order reading skills, teaching them effective reading strategies to use with authentic texts.

These approaches have given students the strategies and the confidence to read longer and more challenging texts. Good practice established in reading has been built on to enable students to write longer and more complex pieces. Resources produced for these projects have been shared within and beyond the TSA. In this section, read in more detail about some of the projects which have had such a positive impact on students' learning.

1 Progression in reading skills and strategies

Teaching school alliance:	Affinity Teaching School Alliance
Teaching school:	Kibworth C of E Primary School
Schools involved:	Great Bowden Primary School Kibworth C of E Primary School Lubenham All Saints C of E Primary School Market Harborough C of E Primary School Meadowdale Primary School Robert Smyth Academy Welland Park Community College

Context

Affinity TSA is keen to develop language teaching in all phases, and to continue to strengthen liaison and collaboration between schools in the alliance. The Languages Support Programme (LSP) gave us an opportunity to address both these themes. It was clear from consultation with interested partner schools that most felt that their teaching of reading in the target language could be improved. Schools are organised within a three-tier system, with transfer at ages 11 and 14. A focus on progression in reading skills is providing a vehicle for bringing teachers together across phases to cooperate and learn from one another.

Description

Affinity's project was designed to focus attention on strategies for teaching reading skills, and to look carefully at the sort of reading activities taking place in classrooms to see if we could identify progression through four key stages. Within the alliance, five primary schools are engaged in the project, all with established languages provision: four offering French and one Spanish. In addition there is a high school for students in Key Stage 3 and an upper school for 14–19 year olds. The project is being led by the headteacher of one of the primary schools.

The project was planned by a working group, and launched via a day event, bringing together representatives from each school. This involved a presentation about the range of published resources available and how to use them, from children's storybooks with limited amounts of text, to novels which might engage older students. All participants brought along examples of resources they had used recently and were keen to find out about how reading was taught in other schools. Whilst primary colleagues learnt about the expectations and requirements for reading in external examinations, secondary teachers found out about the use of authentic storybooks and songs in the primary classroom. The day was also used to agree how we would explore our current practice and discover how pupils felt about reading, in English as well as in the target language.

Following this, participants used questionnaires with pupils to find out about their reading preferences, habits and confidence. Teachers undertook audit checks of their teaching of reading, addressing the types of text and task involved, and the frequency. These were collated and analysed across the project schools, and will be used to make comparisons with future audits later in the year.

Members of the group meet in twilight sessions to discuss what they have been doing, including the activities tried out in lessons, evaluations and resources that they have come across and used. Participants have also been able to visit other partner schools to observe lessons and look at resources. Cross-phase visits have been especially valuable in terms of the extra perspective gained from finding out first-hand about the expectations and the provision for reading in the key stage above or below their own.

Participants are planning to involve students directly in the project through activities such as older students working with younger ones to write a story, create a PowerPoint or animation. The group will be holding a celebratory event, hosted by Robert Smyth Academy, to showcase these, share the project and promote reading. By the end of the first year a resource will have been produced in the form of a booklet which will include sections on the rationale for reading in the target language, ideas for lessons, advice on how to support reading outside the classroom, useful websites and resources, and case studies of what has been achieved in the project. There will be an accompanying disk of sample resources. These will be shared via Affinity's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

Impact

Following the launch day, participants felt inspired and have enjoyed trying out new ideas and resources. Activities to develop reading skills feature more prominently and regularly in our lessons. Participants are consciously trying to put a greater emphasis on reading for pleasure, and spend more time on actively looking for a greater variety of reading texts and resources. There is a focus on locating more authentic materials and trying out strategies to support students in approaching unfamiliar language.

Children already appear to be more 'fired up' for learning, relishing the opportunity to read more from a wide range of resources. In primary schools, for example, the 'reading box' has had much more use, and pupils have commented on how much they are enjoying the new resources. Secondary-age students appear to be more confident when approaching a reading task with unknown language in it. They also say that they are happier to approach texts which are not necessarily connected with the topic being studied. They have found it useful to complete the reading surveys, which then formed the basis of good discussion about reading.

For the teachers involved in the project, opportunities to meet with other colleagues have generated new ideas and more interesting and motivating lessons. Professional relationships between colleagues and partnerships between schools are extremely positive, and we hope to be able to sustain regular meetings and continue this collaboration.

Contact details

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http://www.affinitytsa.co.uk

2 Improving reading skills at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4

Teaching school alliance:	**George Spencer Academy Teaching School Alliance**
Teaching school:	**George Spencer Academy**
Schools involved:	Chellaston Academy Fairfield Primary School Fernwood School Foxwood School George Spencer Academy Heanor Gate School Holgate School Kirk Hallam School Rushcliffe School Wyndham Primary School

Context

George Spencer Teaching School Alliance is committed to supporting professional and curriculum development, and to developing liaison between primary and secondary schools to secure progression for pupils.

Schools in our alliance completed an audit of provision and needs, and the development of reading skills was identified as a potential cross-phase focus. In particular, secondary school students' weakest result in GCSE was often in reading.

We decided to focus on improving reading in three Key Stages so that we could learn from practice in other schools and phases, and explore strategies for achieving progression from ages 7 to 16.

Description

This project was designed to address the need identified by partner schools to improve the teaching of reading, and to look at developing progression in reading through three Key Stages. Representatives from each school met together for half a day to share our perceptions about the development of reading skills, and consider ways forward.

At the beginning of the project, teachers completed an audit detailing their approaches to reading in lessons, including the form and frequency of reading tasks. Students also completed surveys of their attitudes towards reading, and their reading habits. These audits have provided plenty of information about starting points, and have helped to identify areas of focus, including the types of reading topics that are of interest to learners. Teachers have also been informed by an action research project focusing on Key Stage 4, which showed that students often did not have the skills needed to read effectively in the target language but that, more worryingly, they perceived reading to be the 'easy skill'.

The group then met to share their findings, and to consider a range of possible areas for collaboration. Participants are now working on a number of focuses, including using stories in Key Stages 2 and 3, encouraging independent reading and the teaching of reading skills at all levels. They have focused explicitly on introducing activities to develop reading skills and strategies. The project is designed to enable participants to work collaboratively, and provides opportunities to visit other schools (including cross-phase) to look at practice and resources.

At every meeting, teachers are able to discuss their experiences and share their perceptions of the progress they and their learners are making. Meetings also always include an element of sharing good practice, based on the theme of reading. Resources are showcased and then taken back to participating schools. In this way practice is being enhanced, even amongst some very experienced teachers.

By the end of the first year of the project, participants will have completed a second round of questionnaires and surveys of students' attitudes and perceptions. This will be compared with the initial baseline data and will help to identify success and positive impact. In addition, a wide range of resources will have been collated to share, firstly within the teaching schools alliance, and then more widely. The 'end product' will include activities and lessons plans, case studies focusing on particular strategies and lists of useful resources including websites. During the following year an electronic forum will be used to continue sharing and disseminating good practice, but it is hoped that termly meetings will also continue. Everyone involved agrees that the opportunities to meet, share and discuss have been invaluable.

Impact

Everyone involved in the project has gained from their participation, whether by trying new strategies themselves or by hearing about activities and approaches that others have tried out. It has been especially interesting to find out what happens in other Key Stages and phases, and to look at adapting good practice to fit one's own context. Being able to collaborate with colleagues from a different school and visit other classrooms has enhanced everyone's teaching repertoire. It has also been extremely useful to find out systematically about students' attitudes and perceptions.

All participants are now including focused reading activities much more frequently, and with a greater sense of purpose. There is more emphasis on explicitly developing reading skills, and a wider range of text types is being used, including more authentic materials.

Although follow-up surveys have not yet taken place, it is already clear that students are benefiting from this project. Students say they feel more confident when reading, and that they are developing strategies to help them deal with new language and longer texts. They also admit to enjoying reading more, and are pleased that lessons more frequently include articles and stories which they find more interesting.

Contact details

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Susan Jowett	Principal	George Spencer Academy

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3   Developing extended reading skills

Teaching school alliance:	**London West Alliance**
Teaching school:	**Lampton School**
Schools involved:	Feltham Community School Lampton School Parliament Hill School Springwell Junior School

Context

The London West Alliance is committed to improving students' reading skills. Using data from the languages audit conducted at the start of the Languages Support Programme, together with analysis of exam results and anecdotal evidence, the alliance recognised that reading is a skill that has been neglected in the past. It was agreed that a focus on reading would in turn support students' writing and furthermore, raise standards and future results. The TSA was also keen to learn from the teaching of reading at primary school to inform pedagogy at Key Stages 3, 4 and 5. Four alliance schools have created a toolkit to support teachers in developing this skill.

Description

At the beginning of the project, colleagues interviewed Year 10 students, asking how they felt about reading long texts in the target language. They were asked what strategies they used, what they found challenging and what might help them to tackle longer texts in the future. Here are some typical responses:

'When I see a longer text, I'm afraid of the new words.'
'When I see a longer text, I get confused and I lose concentration.'
'When I see a longer text, I feel scared, bored and tired.'

Colleagues then created a list of numerous strategies students could use when tackling longer, more complex texts. For example: reading the first part of the text and making predictions about what comes next; using a list of opposites to find the correct information in a text; raising awareness of the negative form and ways of expressing a negative idea without using the negative form. This list was then shared with students of all ages across Key Stages 2, 3, 4 and 5. Students were asked to identify strategies they already used and to try out some new ones. At the end of each session, students were asked to reflect on which strategies they had employed in the lesson and to consider their effectiveness.

Colleagues met several times after school during this project to discuss progress. Common themes emerged, such as students' overreliance on cognates and dictionaries, students' lack of general knowledge inhibiting understanding. At these meetings, colleagues agreed to create a teacher toolkit of activities to use with students to explore and develop reading skills. This toolkit will be disseminated to schools within the TSA and beyond.

The teacher toolkit aims to develop the teaching and learning of reading, primarily within languages lessons. It is hoped that the toolkit could also support a whole-school focus on raising standards in reading as some of the activities could be used in other subject areas.

The toolkit contains a list of concrete ideas for reading strategies and ways of presenting longer texts to students. Each idea is illustrated and has an explanation of how to use it in the classroom, alongside PowerPoint templates that can be edited and adapted. Video clips of students talking about their own experiences of using different strategies are also included in the toolkit as well as short lesson clips showing the activities in action. The activities span Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 5. The toolkit will be published on the TSA website.

Impact

The impact on learners has been noticeable immediately. Colleagues interviewed students after a series of lessons focusing on reading skills. One student said: *'I feel better when facing longer texts now; I'll feel more confident about them in the future.'*

Teachers have also learnt more about what students find helpful and the reasons for this. It has been established that some of the strategies that we use as teachers may not be as effective for students, such as the use of cognates to help comprehension. For students with a narrower range of vocabulary in English, cognates are often not helpful. For example in Spanish, *sedentario* (meaning 'inactive') is a cognate of the word 'sedentary' in English, but students will not necessarily be familiar with the word 'sedentary', so this will not help them to understand the Spanish word in a text.

Working with students to discover their opinions and to find out what they perceive to be effective encouraged teachers to trial different strategies in the classroom. This has promoted a more creative approach to reading tasks. Teachers have spoken positively about trialling new strategies and about the productive feedback they have received from students. They report a growing sense of confidence amongst students in reading target language texts.

Teachers have commented on the numerous benefits of meeting with their counterparts from different schools and also on the positive impact of meeting with primary colleagues. A typical quote is:

'It is great to be involved in this project and have the opportunity to meet regularly for professional discussion and development.'
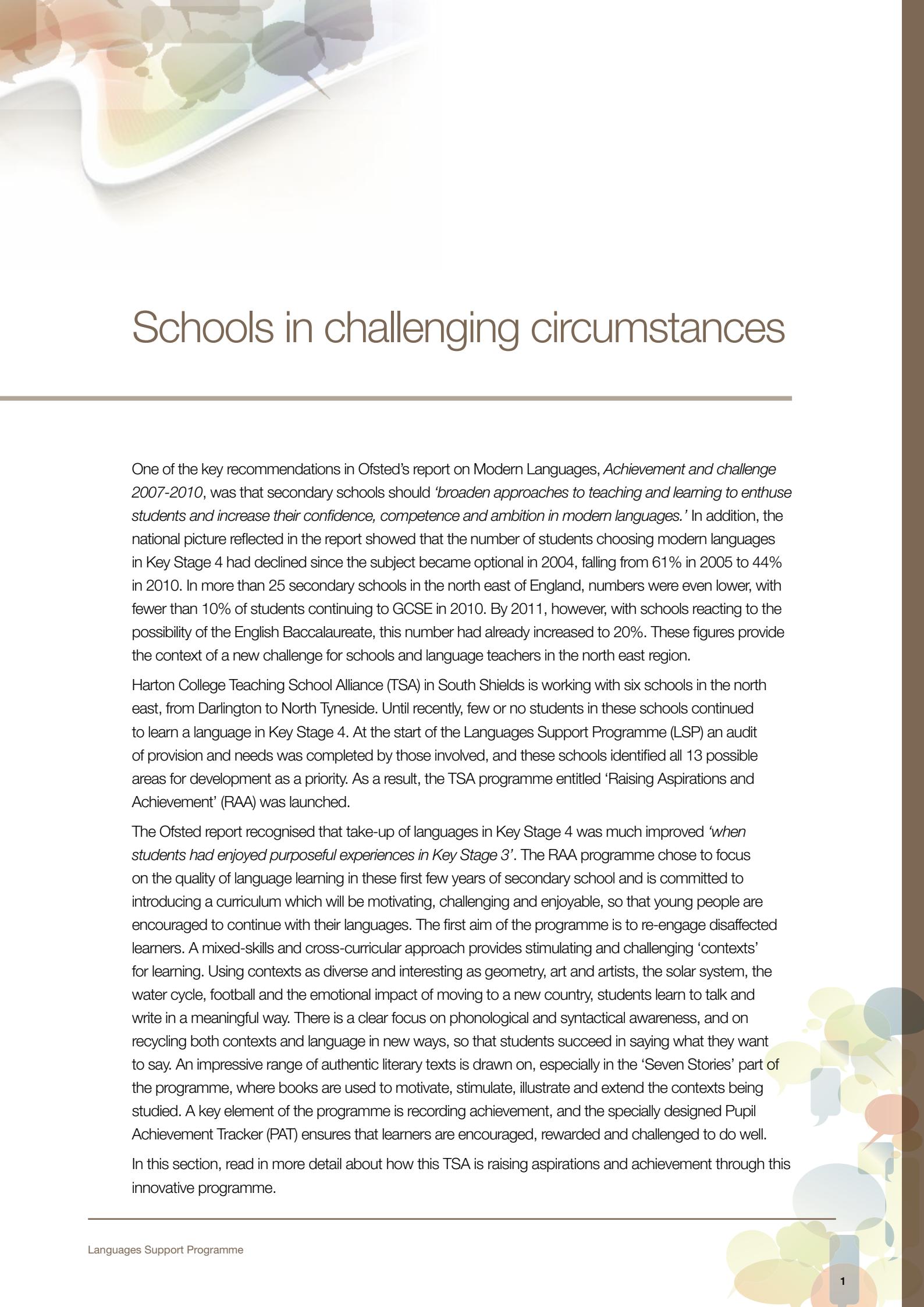
Contact details

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Lynne Isham	Deputy Head of Teaching School	Lampton School

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Schools in challenging circumstances

Schools in challenging circumstances

One of the key recommendations in Ofsted's report on Modern Languages, *Achievement and challenge 2007-2010*, was that secondary schools should *'broaden approaches to teaching and learning to enthuse students and increase their confidence, competence and ambition in modern languages.'* In addition, the national picture reflected in the report showed that the number of students choosing modern languages in Key Stage 4 had declined since the subject became optional in 2004, falling from 61% in 2005 to 44% in 2010. In more than 25 secondary schools in the north east of England, numbers were even lower, with fewer than 10% of students continuing to GCSE in 2010. By 2011, however, with schools reacting to the possibility of the English Baccalaureate, this number had already increased to 20%. These figures provide the context of a new challenge for schools and language teachers in the north east region.

Harton College Teaching School Alliance (TSA) in South Shields is working with six schools in the north east, from Darlington to North Tyneside. Until recently, few or no students in these schools continued to learn a language in Key Stage 4. At the start of the Languages Support Programme (LSP) an audit of provision and needs was completed by those involved, and these schools identified all 13 possible areas for development as a priority. As a result, the TSA programme entitled 'Raising Aspirations and Achievement' (RAA) was launched.

The Ofsted report recognised that take-up of languages in Key Stage 4 was much improved *'when students had enjoyed purposeful experiences in Key Stage 3'*. The RAA programme chose to focus on the quality of language learning in these first few years of secondary school and is committed to introducing a curriculum which will be motivating, challenging and enjoyable, so that young people are encouraged to continue with their languages. The first aim of the programme is to re-engage disaffected learners. A mixed-skills and cross-curricular approach provides stimulating and challenging 'contexts' for learning. Using contexts as diverse and interesting as geometry, art and artists, the solar system, the water cycle, football and the emotional impact of moving to a new country, students learn to talk and write in a meaningful way. There is a clear focus on phonological and syntactical awareness, and on recycling both contexts and language in new ways, so that students succeed in saying what they want to say. An impressive range of authentic literary texts is drawn on, especially in the 'Seven Stories' part of the programme, where books are used to motivate, stimulate, illustrate and extend the contexts being studied. A key element of the programme is recording achievement, and the specially designed Pupil Achievement Tracker (PAT) ensures that learners are encouraged, rewarded and challenged to do well.

In this section, read in more detail about how this TSA is raising aspirations and achievement through this innovative programme.

1 A mixed-skills approach to learning in Key Stage 3

Teaching school alliance:	Harton Teaching School Alliance
Teaching school:	Harton Technology College
Schools involved:	Academy 360 (Sunderland) Churchill Community College (Wallsend) Dyke House College (Hartlepool) Harton Technology College (South Shields) Haughton Academy (Darlington) Jarrow School Sunnydale Community School (Shildon)

Context

This TSA is working with a number of schools where, until recently, few or no students have continued to learn a language in Key Stage 4. Schools are working on a mixed-skills and cross-curricular approach in Key Stage 3. At the regular milestone conferences, teachers explore contexts and adapt materials to suit the planning systems in place in their schools. In Churchill Community College, the department was ready for a radical change in methods and there is a commitment to introduce a curriculum which will be motivating, challenging and enjoyable and will encourage young people to continue with their language learning.

Description

At Churchill Community College in Wallsend, the department has adopted a context-based curriculum since September 2012 as part of the Raising Aspirations and Achievement programme. Classes in Year 7 have learnt how to make a picture with simple shapes and to describe their pictures in French, using connectives and adjectives to create compound sentences. They have proceeded to an exploration of the solar system in French which builds on the sentence structures already practised. Students then explored the theme of personal information in the context of a fictitious French football team. Then they used the 'MYLO' website to design and describe a football kit. They also accessed the website of a real football team and extrapolated information from player profiles to write a full description of a player. They are currently working on the context of healthy living.

At the end of each context, students are expected to produce a presentation of their own choice, and some of these are of very high quality, especially given the low baseline in some classes. In line with the additional aim of re-engaging disaffected learners, there is already strong evidence that the contextual and mixed-skills approach, which has much in common with Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), has re-engaged Year 8 and Year 9 students. Many learners are able to incorporate language learnt in one context into a new one, which, according to the teachers, was a skill not previously well developed. For example, one student drew a picture of a snowman. He described the snowman from memory and without help from the teacher, incorporating language from contexts on shapes and football. There are grammatical mistakes but the language is syntactically correct.

Other contexts include: The Zoo; Three Dimensional Pictures with an exploration of a picture by Fernand Léger; the River Wear and the Water Cycle; and a comparison between English and French schools within the context of school life. Contexts recycle grammar, vocabulary and themes. For example, the healthy living context uses an exploration of the work of the sixteenth-century artist Arcimboldo as a stimulus for creating face pictures made up of different foods as a way of illustrating a healthy and an unhealthy diet: 'You are what you eat.'

Teachers have been able to adapt the materials to make the learning accessible to students who need more steps in their learning, and at the same time, plan for progression and achievement. By the end of the first phase (March 2013) departments involved in the project will have materials to help them embed the contextualised approach for at least two years, taking current Year 7 students into Year 9.

Impact

In Churchill Community College, many Year 8 students had already switched off from language learning, but the introduction of the contextual approach has motivated them again. From the beginning of the course, learners perceive that they are constructing and using sophisticated language. Performance in listening and speaking is surpassing the teachers' expectations. Teachers in the Churchill languages department feel in particular that the new approach is helping learners to develop listening skills in realistic situations and also to develop speaking skills to improve creativity, two of the issues raised by the Ofsted report *Modern languages: Achievement and challenge 2007-2010*. Evidence of students' achievements shared with other colleagues at the milestone conferences has encouraged a corporate evaluation of standards of achievement. This is an outcome not anticipated in the original development plan, but teachers feel it has been very beneficial to be able to develop and trial new ideas with colleagues who know and understand the challenges they face in their daily work. Moreover, colleagues are beginning to feel confident that planning for progression is becoming easier, and that students' achievements as witnessed in this project help them to reach more secure judgements about standards of attainment at regular intervals.

Contact details

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Creating opportunities for more independent reading, and for extended and creative reading

Teaching school alliance:	Harton Teaching School Alliance
Teaching school:	Harton Technology College
Schools involved:	Academy 360 (Sunderland) Churchill Community College (Wallsend) Dyke House College (Hartlepool) Harton Technology College (South Shields) Haughton Academy (Darlington) Jarrow School Sunnydale Community School (Shildon)

Context

This TSA is working with a number of schools where, until recently, few or no students have continued to learn a language in Key Stage 4. Schools are working on a mixed-skills and cross-curricular approach in Key Stage 3. This project includes explicit planning to integrate extended and creative reading into programmes of study and has close links with the National Children's Book Centre, Seven Stories, in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Teachers attended a training day at Seven Stories, and 30 pupils from each school have spent a day there exploring some of the books, which they can also read in school.

Description

Teachers from all participating schools attended a training day at Seven Stories, and worked with experts from the centre to explore five books during the course of the day. The reading of each book was preceded by a drama-based activity to explore the emotions or theme of the book. For example, *Le Loup* (Sara) explores the theme of rejection and alienation, so teachers (and subsequently students) worked together on these themes. Teachers were very positive about the experience and were interested in the possibility of approaching reading in this thematic way, which for most of them was something new, and not without challenge. The themes explored in some of the books also imply the acquisition of different sets of adjectives than might have been encountered early in Key Stage 3, but that was considered a very positive thing.

The books fit very well with the cross-curricular approach. For example, *Un Lion à Paris* (Béatrice Allemagna) looks at adventure, cultural differences, alienation and acceptance. These themes are also explored, though with an unhappy outcome, in a specially written and illustrated story of a young African boy whose career as a professional footballer in France ends in destitution. That theme recycles and develops the language introduced in the football context in Year 7. Similarly, the short book, *ZoZoo* (Mari Bordier) which introduces a series of animals composed of tools and utensils, links to the contexts of the Zoo and Pictures in Three Dimensions.

La planète bizarre (Vouch) has proved popular with all groups of students attending the day at Seven Stories, and is a good starting point for modelling how to create a similar story. The phrases *'il pleut des saucisses'* or *'les chats font coin coin'* evoke ideas for creative adaptation of the book. The students enjoyed the drama activity related to this book which required them to prepare an interview with the inhabitants of a strange planet. This is an activity that could be developed in the target language in school. Some of the stories, although written for younger children, are deceptively simple, and even when there is very little language, as in *Le Loup*, mentioned above, and in *La Nuit* (Betty Bone), the emotional element would make them appropriate for students in Key Stage 4 and beyond.

In fact the visit by students from Academy 360 in Sunderland included students from a Year 10 GCSE class, and also four students from a unit for children with specific learning difficulties. It was a delight to see the GCSE students engaging willingly with all of the drama activities, and clearly enjoying the book readings. The engagement of the children from the unit was also very encouraging: they enjoyed the book readings and participated fully in the drama activities and the discussions about the emotions presented in the books. Their teacher, who is a language graduate, is looking forward to integrating language learning into the specialised curriculum already in place for these young people.

Impact

The involvement of Seven Stories in the Raising Aspirations and Achievement programme has been a very positive experience both for teachers and learners. None of the teachers had thought of using drama as a way of exploring feelings and emotions linked to foreign language books. Authentic reading materials, even if available in language classrooms, are generally used to supplement topics being studied and as activities based on a separate attainment target. The ideas explored at Seven Stories imply a different approach whereby learners can enjoy and be stimulated by a text which may at first sight be inaccessible, either because there is too much complex language, or indeed because there is very little language at all.

The implications for this project and for language teaching in general are very significant. Developing more independent reading, and extended and creative reading, were issues raised by the Ofsted Modern Languages report *Achievement and challenge 2007-2010*. They were also identified as important by all schools surveyed at the beginning of the Languages Support Programme, and are inextricably linked to another two of the Ofsted issues: developing listening skills in authentic situations and developing speaking skills to improve creativity.

Consequently work on the individual books is linked where appropriate to planning for the different contexts being explored across Key Stage 3. The next stage is to explore ways in which the drama activities may be adapted to promote listening and speaking in the target language.

Contact details

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Lisa Moll	Learning Liaison Coordinator	Seven Stories

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http://www.sevenstories.org.uk/

3 Using the Pupil Achievement Tracker (PAT)

Teaching school alliance:	Harton Teaching School Alliance
Teaching school:	Harton Technology College
Schools involved:	Academy 360 (Sunderland) Churchill Community College (Wallsend) Dyke House College (Hartlepool) Harton Technology College (South Shields) Haughton Academy (Darlington) Jarrow School Sunnydale Community School (Shildon)

Context

This TSA is working with a number of schools where, until recently, few, or no students have continued to learn a language in Key Stage 4. Schools are working on a mixed-skills and cross-curricular approach in Key Stage 3 which aims to provide stimulating and challenging contexts for learning and to promote success and engagement. Recording achievement is a key element of the programme and a Pupil Achievement Tracker (PAT) has been commissioned to record students' achievements across each context for learning. In Haughton Academy, Darlington, the PAT is being integrated into lesson delivery as well as planning and evaluation.

Description

The Pupil Achievement Tracker is a sophisticated spreadsheet designed to track students' achievements within each context for learning across Key Stage 3. Each context is mapped to a sequence of learning events which may be determined by the teacher or department as part of their planning for progression and assessment. For example, in the context *Le système solaire*, designed for the beginning of Year 7, there are 18 statements which range from *'I can pronounce the phoneme /y/ and link it to the letter 'u'* to *'I can predict the next sentence'*. The statements do not match level descriptors, as they contain competences that are not measured in the current attainment targets, and they promote mixed-skills teaching and learning. The statements are designed to make explicit to learners the skills that they need in order to become independent users of language. Thus, using connectives to extend and justify a statement may recur in different contexts, or grammatical functions appropriate to a context will be given due emphasis and practised in lessons. Statements may also refer to knowledge about the context and not overtly to the target language, for example, *'I can explain the Water Cycle in French'* or *'I can prepare and present a short talk about the Solar System in Spanish'*.

As students demonstrate their growing competence in the different skills, the teacher enters 1, 2 or 3 against their names in the cell referring to one of the statements of achievement, and the cell turns red, then amber then green. If the teacher notes evidence of unusual or impressive performance she can key in *x*, which then shows a blue cell. In this case, the evidence linked to such a learning event may be recorded, either in a short text or with a hyperlink, for example to an audio clip or a scanned image of writing. In fact, even a small learning event, such as recycling a word learnt in a different context is recognised and recorded, since it helps teachers in a department to map individual learning to progress within classes and year groups.

As the cells turn from blank to the three colours, the teacher and the students can see their progress. The predominance of green and amber will indicate that the class is ready to move on to a new context. The tracker calculates a score for each child and for each class. Thus teachers can compare the progress of individual students and different classes. This helps the department to standardise progress against the attainment targets at appropriate moments; consequently the level descriptors do not drive the planning. A subject leader can also see from the tracker whether all teachers are helping their class to achieve against the statements of achievement. The tracker allows teachers to enter details about students' particular circumstances, such as EAL, Free School Meals, or School Action Plus, and these are taken into account when calculating the score of each child.

Impact

In Haughton Academy, Darlington, the teachers report that students are motivated to participate because they can see their response being recorded. They are keen to see all of the statements for a context so that they have a sense of purpose and can see what they must do to improve; in other words, the statements act not just as lesson objectives, but targets. There has been no confusion or frustration with the colour coding; students understand that, once a cell is red against their name, they are achieving. As they show increasing competence against a statement, the colour changes. The teacher reports that since she began to use the PAT, there has been a significant increase in perseverance, particularly from boys, many of whom tended to give up when faced with a challenge. She feels that it is helping them acquire more resilience and willingness to try harder.

Contact details

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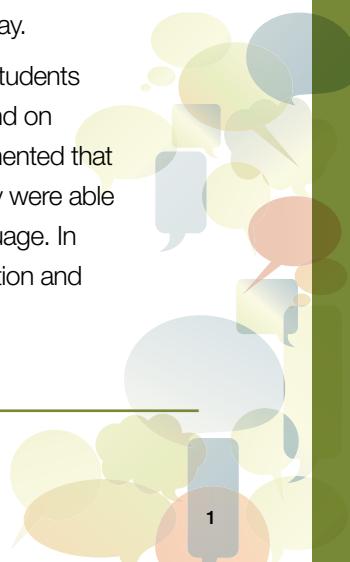
Spontaneous talk

Spontaneous talk

One of the key findings in Ofsted's report on Modern Languages, *Achievement and challenge 2007-2010*, was that *'Speaking was the weakest skill in four out of five of the schools visited'*. The report recommended that schools should *'put much greater emphasis on regular use of the target language in all lessons'* and thus encourage students to speak in meaningful situations. Good or outstanding progress was made where students could react spontaneously and creatively because they had been taught to manipulate the language, for example through information gap activities. However, too often students over-relied on writing and were limited in their spontaneous use of the target language because they were not taught how to respond to everyday requests.

Spontaneous talk was a popular project choice for teaching school alliances (TSAs) because it directly addresses a key element of languages pedagogy. Schools recognised the need to develop best classroom practice in using language for real communication. Projects focused on the teacher's use of the target language, the type of lesson activity and the students' responses. In one TSA, Year 7 built on the GroupTalk methodology developed by Greg Horton (Wildern School), which proved to be motivating and inspiring for teachers as well as students. In another, there was a particular emphasis on boys in Years 9, 10 and 11. In a number of TSAs, teachers worked collaboratively to identify effective strategies and to develop their skills in facilitating and encouraging unplanned and increasingly fluent and complex spontaneous talk. These strategies and toolkits of resources were then shared across the alliance. One TSA chose to focus on developing students' understanding of and ability to apply grammatical frameworks to enable them to express their own thoughts and ideas.

In some ways the term spontaneous talk can be misleading – talk does not simply happen. Strategies to enable this to happen need to be carefully planned and evaluated to ensure that within the framework of spontaneous talk pupils make progress in their ability and confidence to use and develop their knowledge about language and how to express with increasing accuracy what they want to say.

Teachers have found it stimulating to discuss and evaluate what works. As a result of asking students what they need to say, there has been a refocusing on teaching basic classroom language, and on equipping students to cope more confidently with unplanned speaking tasks. Teachers commented that the element of creativity had captured students' imagination and increased engagement. They were able to extend their answers, keep the conversation going and enjoy responding in the target language. In this section, read in more detail about some of the projects which have raised levels of motivation and achievement in spontaneous talk.

1 Developing students' ability to use the target language spontaneously

Teaching school alliance:	Altrincham Grammar School for Girls Alliance Learning
Teaching school:	Altrincham Grammar School for Girls
Schools involved:	Altrincham Grammar School for Boys Altrincham Grammar School for Girls Cheadle Hulme High School

Context

Despite a general concern across the Teaching School Alliance (TSA) that students were not developing the ability to use the target language spontaneously, two schools in the alliance reported examples of students who were able and willing to speak spontaneously. This project aimed to identify what the teacher was doing in those lessons, so that these approaches and strategies could be shared across the TSA. A toolkit of resources and advice would then be developed to share with other schools. The project focused on Year 9.

Description

The first step was to research what good practice already existed outside the alliance. To this end, a colleague attended a session on spontaneous talk at Manchester Metropolitan University and fed back to the rest of the project team.

Colleagues agreed that it would be useful to include an element of action research in the project, and that this should focus on the impact of group and pair work on efforts to increase students' ability to use the target language spontaneously. The research questions that colleagues investigated were:

- *What do we mean by 'spontaneous'?*
- *What is the current level of spontaneous talk?*
- *What are we going to do in order to increase student resilience and the frequency of spontaneous utterances?*

Students were asked to give their opinions in survey form, to gather a learner perspective. Students were very positive about their language lessons and teachers were surprised at the high value they placed on the opportunity to engage in pair and group work. Students also reported little negative impact from being corrected by their teachers. Most students appreciated being corrected.

A key element of the project was classroom observation. Colleagues agreed a structure and developed a template for the auditing process, plus a tool for taking a baseline measurement of spontaneous talk. Colleagues conducted an audit in their own departments to learn what they already did effectively to generate (or hinder) spontaneous use of the target language. These findings were then discussed, and colleagues started to gather, adapt and develop resources which had been found to be effective.

The leads from each school then met to share, compare and discuss findings. A plan was subsequently drawn up for cross-school observations.

Following these inter-school visits, colleagues met to discuss their observations and agree the content of a toolkit. This will include teacher guidance on a strategy for spontaneous talk, lesson observation templates for measuring instances of spontaneous talk, and teaching activities with resources and guidance. Responsibility for producing the content was agreed and colleagues spent a day together working on the toolkit as well as working independently on their own sections.

The toolkit is to be quality assured by the TSA's Specialist Leader of Education (SLE) and it will be shared at a dissemination event for other schools in the alliance and beyond.

Impact

After having considered the factors affecting students' spontaneous use of target language, and following feedback from students across the schools involved, colleagues increased pair and group work within their classroom routines. Teachers have witnessed a distinct impact on student confidence and a willingness to speak more spontaneously, not just during these activities, but also in the whole class context. It was agreed that teacher use of target language is of paramount importance in providing the model to inspire students. There should be established routines and expectations for generating talk. Students should be allowed to speak freely, without putting their hands up, in order to encourage spontaneity. Initial observations within departments had shown how teacher discipline or control stifled students who wanted to speak freely in the target language. When the teacher uses gestures which have been well established with the class, this is helpful in keeping students talking without the teacher's voice interrupting. Students have been given the tools for agreeing and disagreeing with each other, which they are encouraged to use throughout lessons for both learning activities and 'chat'. This has become a starting point from which students can spontaneously respond to each other.

The influence of a very successful speaking support resource has subsequently been noticed in some students' written work, allowing them to widen the way in which they express themselves and to make faster progress in writing as well as speaking.

Contact details

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2   Classroom Talk

Teaching school alliance:	Cambridge Area Teaching School Alliance
Teaching school:	Comberton Village College
Schools involved:	Bassingbourn Village College, Comberton Village College, Ernulf Academy, Hinchingbrooke School, Leventhorpe School, Linton Village College, Longsands Community College, Melbourn Village College, Manor Community College, Netherhall School, Parkside School/Coleridge Community College

Context

The Ofsted report on Modern Languages, *Achievement and challenge 2007-2010*, highlighted the need for more teacher and student use of the target language (TL). As part of the DfE Languages Support Programme (LSP), a baseline languages audit was completed by all participating secondary schools within the Cambridge Teaching Schools Network. Developing speaking skills to improve spontaneity was recorded as a high priority. Building on previous collaborative work, the Classroom Talk project was devised, which focuses on the development of TL use by both teachers and students, including spontaneous talk.

Description

Providing Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for language teachers is at the heart of the Classroom Talk project, which aims to improve the language learning experience for young people. CPD has been provided in several key ways: direct input from the Languages SLE, the use of outside expertise and the development of teacher leaders.

The project began with a Development Day where project teachers agreed to engage in research-informed TL practice with identified classes, trialling strategies to increase and improve classroom talk. A self-evaluation document was used to map progress, focusing on: teacher TL talk, student-to-teacher talk, planned tasks and student-to-student talk.

The lead teachers met two months later to discuss their work. This twilight event provided valuable leadership development for those involved, enabling them to reflect on and assess their progress. Although the schools in the project are all at different stages and the teachers involved have different levels of experience, the project has been organised so that schools can find their own appropriate starting points.

Specific strategies which have facilitated improved classroom talk include:
* widespread development and use of core language 'table mats' for routine TL
* specific TL lessons built into schemes of work to teach language for communication
* collaborative departmental TL lesson planning, followed by teaching and evaluation
* rewarding student-teacher and student-student spontaneous TL use (merits, phone calls home etc)
* focus on students' ability to form questions autonomously and the provision of opportunities to do this routinely

- monitoring of student spontaneous talk (by teacher, or by students as 'secret police')
- increased clarity of teacher TL: gestures, cognates, concrete examples
- use of short simple instructions to ensure understanding; linking these to lesson objectives (in TL)
- students filling gaps in each other's knowledge rather than relying on teacher translation
- exploitation of 'down-time' for real TL conversation (e.g. on arrival whilst unpacking or at the end of the lesson) to encourage creative thinking and using what they know in a real-life context.

All the above strategies have the aim of creating a supportive, engaging environment whilst setting very clear expectations.

Two immersion days were held at Anglia Ruskin University for mixed groups of Year 10 students, focusing on a range of techniques including memorisation and revision strategies. The emphasis was on developing students' confidence and competence to tackle speaking controlled assessments and to take the initiative in spoken interaction.

Two action research projects were carried out: 'Classroom Talk from the beginning' and 'Classroom Talk: exploiting all opportunities to increase student target language talk'. These show how opportunities for TL interaction result in learning gains for students. The findings can be accessed on the Cambridge Teaching Schools Network website.

The project will culminate in the development of a 'Classroom Talk Toolkit for Language Teachers' containing video extracts, guidelines, teaching strategies and approaches and access to a range of resources.

Impact

All project teachers have improved their practice and developed their skills in the following ways:

- Improved ratio of student-teacher TL talk
- Greater emphasis in lessons on communicative use of TL
- A number of replicable strategies/routines.

In classes where sustained use of TL is now the norm, the following were observed:

- Students rising to meet higher expectations and clearly accepting 100% teacher TL use
- Increasing percentage of student-teacher TL talk
- Higher levels of motivation and purpose
- Apparent link between high levels of teacher and student TL use and achievement.

Students' ability to interact in the TL is seen to improve where:

- mime and gesture support teacher talk
- checking with students ensures that the meaning is clear (if necessary, following up with remedial strategies)
- frequent use of examples makes explanations concrete and 'in the moment'
- teachers write up just the TL word on the board, but expect students to record both the English and the TL in their exercise books (asking a student to translate orally)
- there is thoughtful planning and judgement about which key language to spend time 'drip-feeding' into whole-class interaction (based on the usefulness to the students of words such as 'question' and 'answer' but also high-frequency words such as 'almost' or 'quickly')
- students model and scaffold question/sentence formation for other students.

Contact details

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3 Spontaneous talk

Teaching school alliance:	**Richmond Teaching School Alliance**
Teaching school:	**Waldegrave School for Girls**
Schools involved:	Grey Court School Hampton Academy Hampton Hill Junior School Orleans Park School Orleans Primary School St Elizabeth's School Teddington School Waldegrave School for Girls

Context

Richmond TSA is committed to enabling schools to work collaboratively on the development of languages across the alliance at both primary and secondary level. Orleans Park languages department has strong links with the University of Cumbria and was keen to share the successes they have experienced as a result of their partnership work. This has included a focus on the independent and spontaneous use of target language by the learners in the classroom. The programme was therefore devised to share ideas and good practice and to develop school-to-school support within the local authority.

Description

Secondary schools from across the borough were invited to take part in this exciting project. Participating schools were given the opportunity to attend a launch event in July 2012 and then a series of training days throughout the following year. The planning of these sessions is a collaborative process. University, school and local authority colleagues work together to ensure that everyone's needs are met.

Teachers were asked to trial materials back in their own classrooms and to share ideas and feed back to each other on a regular basis, either electronically or during the regular local authority subject leader meetings. Bespoke support (such as lesson observations and feedback or training) was also available for each school.

The focus of the launch event was to show how an emphasis on the language of everyday classroom routines can facilitate communicative competence. Dr Colin Christie shared the findings from his research on spontaneous talk. This was followed by a discussion and practical activity. Colleagues then observed Orleans Park teachers deliver lessons that demonstrated how an emphasis on student-led work can motivate and enthuse learners. Teachers and pupils use gestures which are understood by all to support language acquisition and students are encouraged to interrupt their teachers and even contradict them. The target language is used for real purpose and to discuss matters which are genuinely of interest to the learners; for example a Key Stage 4 group planned their work around a forthcoming school prom.

The second session focused on creativity and spontaneous use of language. Colleagues were given the opportunity to consider creative writing activities that challenge Key Stage 3 students to think and allow them to use their imagination. Materials linked to cultural and creative aspects of teaching and learning were discussed and shared with a view to helping teachers prepare their learners for Key Stage 4 and subsequently for A level. Examples of language activities included were acrostics, categorising items of vocabulary, finding the odd one out, etc. Colleagues again observed Orleans Park teachers deliver lessons. Colleagues attending both sessions were asked to reflect on their practice and to consider how to make the best possible use of what they had seen, for example the use of mime and song in their classrooms and developing creative writing activities.

The third training day will focus on transition between Key Stages 2 and 3. The aim of this day is for increased and improved liaison between primary and secondary schools in order to bring coherence and continuity to pupils' learning as they move from Year 6 to Year 7. By encouraging the use of similar activities, transition will be made more effective. Primary and secondary colleagues will work together to learn from each other about classroom practice and how best to help their learners use target language spontaneously.

The final summer term session will be an opportunity for secondary colleagues to review and reflect on the overall programme and to make plans for the future. Primary colleagues will meet separately to review their findings.

Impact

The TSA will be sharing project outputs on its website. These will include schemes of work, glossaries, lesson plans and packs of creative writing materials.

Teachers who have taken part in the training sessions already report that there is an increase in students' use of target language for real purposes across participating secondary schools. The Head of Department in one of the schools involved reports that schemes of work, activities and resources have been shared and are being put to effective use within her department. Evaluation forms from the training days indicate that teachers are reflecting on their practice and implementing the activities and strategies they have observed.

In Orleans Park itself, six out of seven lessons recently observed by a range of colleagues were judged to be outstanding. Trainer capacity has been developed as the Advanced Skills Teacher at Orleans Park is now in a position to support other schools.

Partnerships between schools have been strengthened through this programme and colleagues feel that they have been able to develop professionally as a result of the training and dialogue in which they have taken part.

Plans are already in place to take the project forward. The headteacher of the TSA reports that the achievements of the project have included collaborative working across schools, both secondary to secondary and cross-phase, and the opportunity to use professionals from within the TSA to develop practice across the alliance.

Contact details

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Jo Longhurst	Headteacher	Orleans Park School
Janet Livesey	Head of Languages	Orleans Park School
Christine Capon	Specialist Leader of Education	Hampton Hill Junior Scool

http://www.waldegrave.richmond.sch.uk/

Transition

Transition

One of the key recommendations in Ofsted's report on Modern Languages, *Achievement and challenge 2007-2010*, was that there should be *'increased liaison between primary and secondary schools to bring coherence and continuity to pupils' learning in modern languages at the point of transfer'*. Where good links had been established, schools had devised systems which informed progression, and both phases benefited from reciprocal visits, discussions about transfer and specific projects developed to 'bridge the gap'. However, the report found that progression between Key Stage 2 and 3 was generally underdeveloped and that secondary schools in particular should urgently consider how to build on students' prior attainment.

All participating teaching school alliances (TSAs) worked on Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 transition. The projects involved both teachers and students from each phase visiting each other's schools, working and planning together. Several TSAs developed engaging units of work to support transition from Year 6 to Year 7, with two TSAs designing a framework for Spanish spanning Year 5 to Years 7/8. One TSA focused on French phonics across Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3, planning for progression and improving learning outcomes. In one TSA, teams of three pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6, with their teachers, attended workshops led by sixth-form 'language leaders'. Back in school, these Key Stage 2 pupils coached their peers. Others focused on planning consistent assessment strategies and reporting templates, with one TSA developing e-portfolios to share information. In two TSAs, storytelling was the main theme. Other projects tapped into primary expertise in literacy and oracy to improve these areas in Key Stage 3. Transition from GCSE to A level and university also featured in projects involving Initial Teacher Trainees.

As a result of cross-phase collaborative work, teachers have adapted or created new schemes of work. In particular, secondary school teachers are using their increased awareness of primary literacy strategies to inform a more challenging Key Stage 3 MFL curriculum. Primary pupils feel more confident about transferring to secondary school, and secondary students' language has improved through working with younger pupils. In this section, read in more detail about some of these successful partnership projects.

1 Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 5 transition

Teaching school alliance:	**Fallibroome Teaching School Alliance**
Teaching school:	**The Fallibroome Academy**
Schools involved:	All Hallows Catholic College The Fallibroome Academy Tytherington High School Wilmslow High School

Context

All secondary schools in this TSA have a sixth form and offer languages at A level. Some students come new to the schools at sixth form, but most A level linguists have studied GCSE at the same school. The TSA is committed to addressing the significant leap from GCSE to A level particularly regarding learning styles, independence, cultural awareness and level of linguistic challenge. This project aims to produce a six-week scheme of work in French which will be taught for the first six weeks of the AS course.

Description

Three schools are involved in writing the scheme of work and a Specialist Leader of Education (SLE) and teacher of A level from a fourth school is attending meetings and playing a quality assurance role. The first meeting of the team, in the summer term 2012, was used to agree pedagogical principles and plan the project. The scope of the survey was also discussed and agreed.

During the summer term, Year 12 students at one of the schools were asked to think back to the beginning of Year 12 and plan a lesson for the incoming Year 12 students. The learning from this was shared with the project team at a subsequent meeting. The lead teacher devised two surveys, one for students and another for teachers. Survey Monkey was used for the surveys, which were completed during the first two weeks of September by teachers and students from all four schools. Responses were received from 64 pupils and 13 teachers. The project leader analysed the results. Teacher and student responses were broadly similar although on the whole students rated their knowledge and understanding more highly than did the teachers. The student survey revealed that the majority were lacking many basic skills when dealing with a reading or listening extract. It also highlighted a lack of confidence amongst many students when taking part in oral activities. A large percentage of students did little or no independent study outside the parameters of set homework. The survey suggested that the scheme of work should cover basic grammar of past, present and future tense, and adjectival endings as well as independent study skills and how to approach listening, speaking and reading tasks.

The project leader shared the survey findings with the project team at a meeting, which allowed for discussion in great depth about effective teaching and learning at AS level. The necessary skills and content were agreed and each colleague was allocated a two-week section of the scheme of work to prepare. Individuals then went away and prepared their schemes of work liaising with a colleague from the project for feedback.

The group met again in the spring term to share with each other what they had produced. During this meeting teachers looked at each other's work and adapted their own as necessary to produce a coherent scheme of work. The resulting scheme of work was then shared with colleagues from the TSA and beyond at a dissemination event.

The scheme of work is to be trialled for the first time in September/October 2013. Teachers and students will then evaluate the scheme and it will be updated. It is hoped that versions in German and Spanish will also be developed.

Impact

The initial surveys have had a significant impact on teachers' language teaching and practice. This has led to a greater emphasis, both within the transition scheme of work and in teachers' general day-to-day practice, on developing student competence in all four skills, as well as encouraging independent learning. This has been implemented through activities such as spontaneous speech at the beginning and end of lessons to promote greater confidence in oral skills. Teachers have modified how they set homework to incorporate more tasks requiring students to report back their findings to the class. This has helped foster better independent learning techniques, and timed reading and listening activities have also helped to hone these skills.

There has been a greater awareness amongst Year 12 students about the components of AS level learning, evidenced by the fact that they ask many more pertinent skills- and grammar-related questions than did the previous Year 12. For the current Year 13 there has been a sharper focus on improving their language skills through independent study, evidenced by students talking about information they have found from a variety of French websites. There has been a noticeable improvement in up-to-date facts given in essays.

A key learning point has been that it is crucial to focus on the core grammar and allow students to share their anxieties so that strategies can be developed and personalised early on to give everyone the best possible start to the A level course.

Contact details

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2

Creating a Year 5 – Year 8 Spanish curriculum

Teaching school alliance:	Saltford Teaching School Alliance
Teaching school:	Saltford C of E Primary School
Schools involved:	St Gregory's Catholic College, Bath St John's Catholic Primary School, Bath St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Bath

Context

Creating a Year 5 – Year 8 Spanish curriculum would start to address the priorities expressed in the initial audit for the Language Support Programme: developing a whole-school approach to language learning, improving Key Stage 2–3 transition, planning for progression and developing language learning strategies. The aim was to prepare pupils in advance for the next stage, when they will study their options as discrete subjects, rather like a middle school but without a middle school structure. This approach had been tried out in the transition from Reception to Year 1 in one of the primary schools, and will also be trialled across the Key Stage 1–2 boundary.

Description

Creating such a curriculum involves primary and secondary colleagues working intensively together, comparing pedagogical approaches as well as content. The first step was to produce an audit of all pupils in Years 5–8 in the two primary schools and the secondary school. The aim was to gather pupils' views on the effectiveness of different types of methodology and pedagogy, the classroom environment, what could be improved, their needs and wants and any new ideas. The information gathered was wider than simply languages, because the hope was to extend this concept of the continuum to other subject areas.

The audit was carried out with the new classes in September with interesting results. In all cases, when responding to the question *'How do you like to learn?'* emphasis was placed on the use of original and authentic materials such as news stories. This was also the case for speaking, where children in Key Stage 3 had a preference for group discussion or partner talk, whilst children in Key Stage 2 highlighted speaking for purpose, for example making a film for a partner school or having a dialogue with a native speaker. In some instances, mention was made of creative work such as music, art, PE and drama, but there was little or no mention of book-based work. When asked which methods did not work, it was generally felt that copying words down was less effective without sufficient opportunity to revise pronunciation or meaning. Likewise, insufficient time (too much 'teacher talk') or understanding (instructions delivered in target language) to complete a task was another perceived barrier to learning. Children in Year 8 appeared more comfortable working with a partner or group than completing written tasks alone. In all cases, children were keen to have new and stimulating topics, time to review their work and an understanding of purpose for their learning.

After completing the audit, primary and secondary teachers visited each other's schools to observe teaching of languages and other subjects, and to look at pupils' experience in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 classrooms. They also looked at the extent to which teaching could be done in topics, cross-phase, via a creative curriculum. After these visits, they worked together to establish which content was covered in which Key Stage, and the impact of any prior learning.

The headteacher of the secondary school was keen to support the pupils' spiritual development too, as the schools belong to the Catholic Federation. As a result, the group decided to use some familiar Bible stories which would fit in well with existing schemes of work. For example, a Spanish version of 'The Lost Coin' could be used to teach or consolidate learning of adjectives and nouns for items of furniture and prepositions *('Is it under the chair? No....')*. The story was written at two levels of difficulty so it could be used either in Key Stage 2 or Key Stage 3. The teachers then created a PowerPoint presentation of the story, which will eventually include sound files to support pronunciation for non-specialist teachers.

Impact

The teachers involved are already changing their approach to language teaching and Key Stage 2–3 transition. They have a broader view of language teaching pedagogy, having spent time in each other's classrooms and having had professional exchange with each other. They have a deeper understanding of where the children are coming from and going to, and this is reflected in the curriculum they are producing.

The teachers are confident that pupils will have a more positive experience of language learning around the point of transfer to secondary school once the new curriculum is implemented. Their prior learning will be taken into account and provision will be better aligned with the pupils' capabilities, all leading to greater confidence.

The Key Stage 3 teacher reports that they were able to identify areas of language that are not covered extensively at Key Stage 3 and can therefore be a real focus at Key Stage 2. This, along with the cross-curricular stories, will ensure a more positive approach to Spanish in Key Stage 3. She also reports that it had been difficult to find a new angle to extend Year 7 pupils with prior knowledge of Spanish, but this was made possible by the opportunity for Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 teachers to plan effectively together. She feels this curriculum will lead to smoother transition with better differentiation.

The curriculum will be disseminated across the Catholic Federation, leading to improved Key Stage 2–3 transition across Year 7, regardless of which primary school the children have attended.

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3

Literacy for Languages – a Key Stage 2–3 transition project

Teaching school alliance:	South Lakes Federation (SLF)
Teaching school:	Queen Elizabeth School
Schools involved:	Arnside National School Dallam School Milnthorpe Primary School Queen Elizabeth School

Context

This TSA is committed to improving transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. Dallam School has been sending language teachers to teach French or Spanish in primary classrooms since 2000. Very few language teachers however had observed literacy lessons at Key Stage 2 and few primary teachers had observed lessons in Year 7. It was felt that teachers from each phase should observe the preceding or subsequent Key Stage and use their better understanding to develop a scheme of work for languages and literacy to be taught at the end of Key Stage 2 and the beginning of Key Stage 3.

Description

The project involves one secondary school and two primary schools working together led by an Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) at Dallam School. The Specialist Leader of Education (SLE) from the South Lakes Federation, based at Queen Elizabeth School, is involved in quality-assuring the scheme of work.

In the first instance the AST liaised with secondary and primary colleagues to detail the ambitions of the project and the proposed activities and outputs. There then followed a series of cross-phase observations, discussions and joint planning sessions leading to the creation of the Transition scheme of work.

Key Stage 2 teachers reported from Year 7 observations that:

1. Year 7 students were, to their previous teachers' surprise, well able to participate in lessons entirely taught in the target language, were understanding grammatical points and making good use of aural and visual clues as well as bilingual dictionaries. Students coped with faster paced and more structured lessons.

2. Teachers were impressed by the students' ability to learn entirely in the target language and suggested that specialist secondary staff should therefore teach more in Year 6.

In joint planning sessions, primary teachers were keen to develop Key Stage 3 ideas for 'paralinguistic' and silent communication, realising these would help early learners overcome panic at 'not knowing the words'. They appreciated the stress on breadth of language being more important than length of vocabulary lists and were keen to increase Year 5 and Year 6 pupils' work on language structures.

Key Stage 3 teachers reported from Year 5/6 observations that pupils were already able to analyse texts (e.g. for opinions and facts), to discuss text structure, and to balance positive-negative arguments in their own writing. They showed a much better knowledge than expected of connectives, time phrases, conjunctions and register of language. Key Stage 2 pupils had more vocabulary in their own language and higher writing skills than Key Stage 3 languages teachers expected.

Primary teachers were most impressed by the challenges that their ex-pupils face in Year 7 and their ability to rise to them, although they expressed some concern about support for lower-ability learners. Primary colleagues said at meetings that they now see the benefit to pupils of the transition visits and events offered by the secondary school to pupils in the summer of Year 6.

The assessment and recording of pupils' progress between the mid-point of the summer term in Year 6 and the mid-point of the autumn term in Year 7 will be an essential part of the trial and future transition arrangements. The scheme of work now in development will be taught for the first time to the pupils in Year 6 in summer 2013 and continue to be taught at Dallam in Year 7 in the autumn term 2013.

Impact

Reports from cross-phase observations indicated that both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 teachers realised they could raise expectations of pupils in their own phase, and that this could have a local impact immediately.

The project activities have had the following impact:

- Teachers will aim to focus in Year 6 on cognates and similarities in grammar and to build on the pupils' ability to extract information from text and speech by deduction.
- Teachers will raise their expectations of pupils' levels of literacy, particularly in writing more complex accounts from an earlier stage in the target language learning.
- Secondary teachers intend to adapt their targets, planning and methodology to advance on the skills they now realise are in place in Key Stage 2.
- Primary teachers will aim to increase the challenge of cross-language work in Years 5 and 6, thus improving knowledge about language and language learning strategies, but now feel rather less confident of their own language skills to teach at a level approaching that of Year 7.
- Key Stage 3 teachers will plan for learners to reach higher levels in speaking and particularly writing, by making more reference to the skills and knowledge pupils have gained in Key Stage 2. However, secondary teachers will need to develop methodology carefully to do this without resorting to the use of English in languages lessons. This will require further thought and discussion.

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Using authentic materials
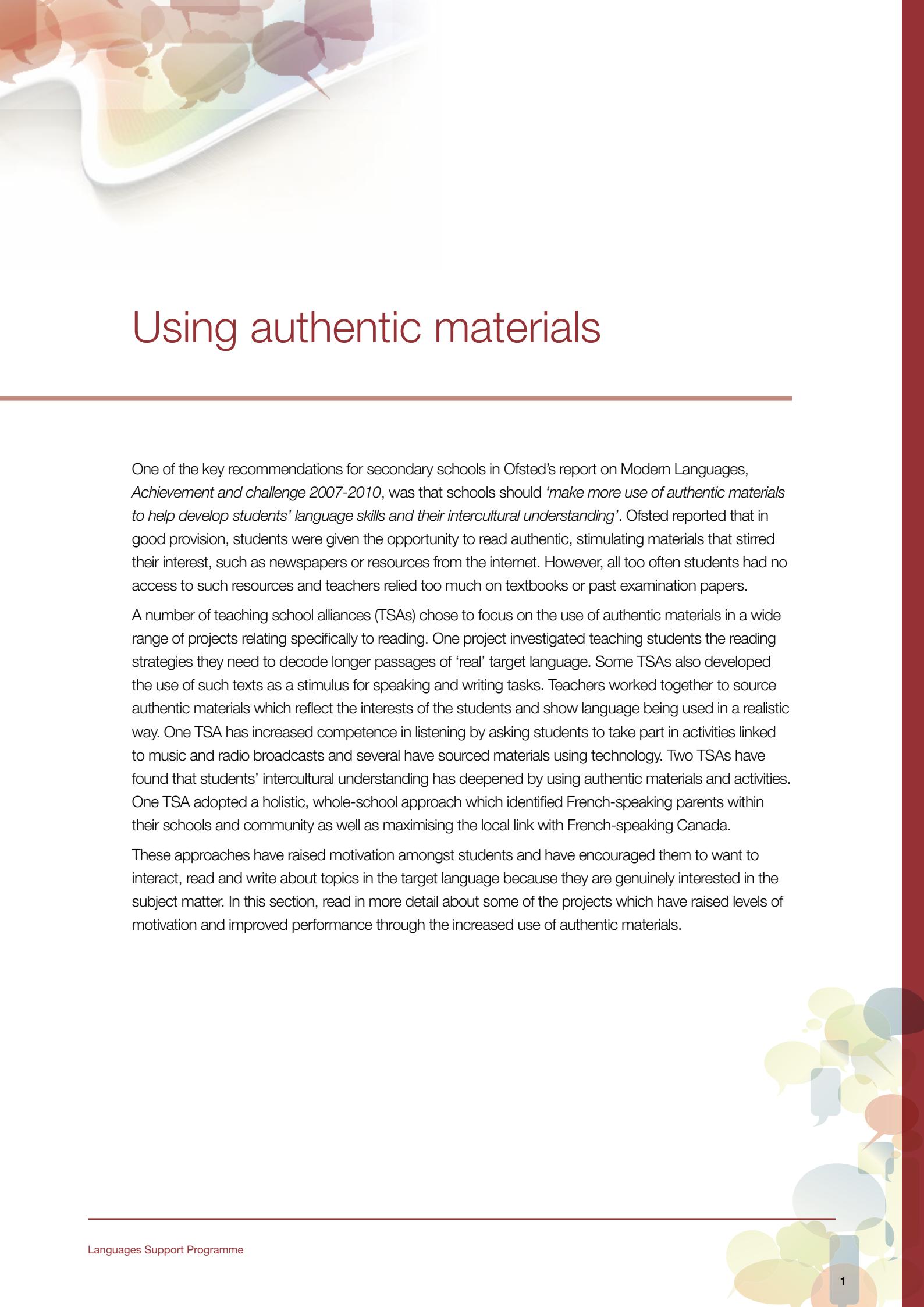
Using authentic materials

One of the key recommendations for secondary schools in Ofsted's report on Modern Languages, *Achievement and challenge 2007-2010*, was that schools should *'make more use of authentic materials to help develop students' language skills and their intercultural understanding'*. Ofsted reported that in good provision, students were given the opportunity to read authentic, stimulating materials that stirred their interest, such as newspapers or resources from the internet. However, all too often students had no access to such resources and teachers relied too much on textbooks or past examination papers.

A number of teaching school alliances (TSAs) chose to focus on the use of authentic materials in a wide range of projects relating specifically to reading. One project investigated teaching students the reading strategies they need to decode longer passages of 'real' target language. Some TSAs also developed the use of such texts as a stimulus for speaking and writing tasks. Teachers worked together to source authentic materials which reflect the interests of the students and show language being used in a realistic way. One TSA has increased competence in listening by asking students to take part in activities linked to music and radio broadcasts and several have sourced materials using technology. Two TSAs have found that students' intercultural understanding has deepened by using authentic materials and activities. One TSA adopted a holistic, whole-school approach which identified French-speaking parents within their schools and community as well as maximising the local link with French-speaking Canada.

These approaches have raised motivation amongst students and have encouraged them to want to interact, read and write about topics in the target language because they are genuinely interested in the subject matter. In this section, read in more detail about some of the projects which have raised levels of motivation and improved performance through the increased use of authentic materials.

1 Using authentic materials to support reading in Year 9

Teaching school alliance:	Cabot Learning Federation
Teaching school:	John Cabot Academy
Schools involved:	Bradley Stoke Community School Bristol Metropolitan Academy Hans Price Academy John Cabot Academy King's Oak Academy

Context

In the light of the recent Ofsted report, this TSA acknowledged that too few of their teachers were willing to expose Key Stage 3 students to more difficult and challenging texts. It was decided to aim the project at Year 9, since this is the year in which there is the most disengagement from languages. Some schools in the alliance have a two-year Key Stage 3, so they wanted to make the curriculum more interesting in Year 9. Others have a three-year Key Stage 3, so they wanted to engage students who might otherwise not consider carrying their languages on to GCSE.

Description

An audit revealed that reading using authentic materials was an area of priority across all secondary schools participating in the project. A workshop run by the Professional Development Consortium for languages provided further confirmation that reading would be a valuable focus for action research, with the following questions providing useful pointers for investigation:

- What impact does teaching comprehension strategies for reading have on learners' ability to gain an overall understanding of a passage?
- What impact does teaching comprehension strategies have on learners' level of confidence/self-efficacy for reading or listening?
- What impact does teaching some sound-spelling rules have on learners' ability to understand reading passages?
- Does teaching a range of comprehension strategies for listening/reading lead learners to use a wider range of such strategies?

Working as a partnership, the participating teachers benefited from the face-to-face opportunities offered by the project, which enabled them to collaborate effectively and develop resources, or amend existing ones. The first meeting was used to agree a range of reading strategies to use with the Year 9 students. All agreed this was critical if they were to evaluate the success of the methodology they would implement. Teachers agreed that students are inclined to rely on their ability to recognise cognates, and this tends to be their sole strategy to help them unlock and decode texts.

Teachers then spent time sourcing authentic materials and developing activities to accompany them which would require learners to use some of the identified strategies. These activities were then carried out in Year 9 groups in each school.

Student engagement was good, and teachers found that the materials provided an extra cultural dimension for which there is often not enough time in the curriculum, certainly not through the typical textbook-driven approach.

The group is now aiming to involve more teachers within the remit of the project. They have the opportunity to do this via Network Nights, which are scheduled to take place once a term. This is a forum of best practice where all the departments within the Cabot Learning Federation meet together.

As students become more trained in and confident with the key strategies, a self-access approach may be developed, which may appeal to gifted and talented pupils. The group may also investigate Edmodo (an online platform) as a potentially effective forum for exploring the idea of greater interactivity. There is, however, a tension between ease of access and authenticity. If a text has to be adapted very considerably, clearly the risk will be that the authenticity goes. The group found that the scaffolding and teaching process were really critical and this became an area for further exploration, as well as how to differentiate within a group so that all are sufficiently supported and challenged.

The texts and accompanying activities took a long time to create, and this has to be acknowledged even if the value is obvious. Many colleagues were surprised at how positive students were, and they themselves became fully committed to trying to embed reading opportunities into their schemes of learning.

Impact

The teachers observed a considerable impact on their students: not least an improvement in students' identification of opinions and connectives, and their ability to decode meaning based on context. The approach to sounding out words, particularly in French, was also beneficial.

There was an impact on teachers as well as learners, as they recognised their need to trust students more and allow them to work in different groupings.

Many students surprised themselves by how much they could do, using other stimuli such as headlines and pictures as directed by the teacher. If the content of the article was suitable for the group in question, there was no discernible variance between the engagement of boys and girls. Looking ahead, the group felt they could do more to make the texts more interactive, even adding sound and more colour, and building them into mini-units where there would also be an opportunity for speaking work.

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