

Authority: East Renfrewshire

Case Study Focus: The development of intercultural awareness and language competence in the primary school

Establishments: Learners' stage/s: P1-7

Practitioner/Staff role: French Foreign Language Assistant in collaboration with Specialist Teacher of Modern Languages

This Case Study illustrates how a French Foreign Language Assistant has assumed a variety of different roles and has developed a number of strategies to assist pupils' learning of French language, culture and traditions in a primary school. As the school has a large number of pupils and the Foreign Language Assistant's time is limited to only two hours per week, her contribution has necessarily had to be well planned but 'light touch'. However, as will be seen below, the commitment and interest she has shown has made a great impact on the children.

Within this project, the following aspects of CfE were explored:

This case study exemplifies how all three of the Introductory Statements from the CfE Modern Languages Framework can be developed through using creative and cultural activities as the context for the language learning experience.

'I gain a deeper understanding of my first language and appreciate the richness and interconnected nature of languages.'

'I develop skills that I can use and enjoy in work and leisure throughout my life.'

'I enhance my understanding and enjoyment of other cultures and of my own and gain insights into other ways of thinking and other views of the world.'

By engaging the pupils in a wide range of collaborative activities, relating to French culture and to the pupils' own experiences, the project develops the four capacities that underpin CfE in the following ways:

Successful Learners with enthusiasm and motivation for learning and able to learn independently and as part of a group in order to communicate in the foreign language.

Confident Individuals with ambition and self-respect and able to relate to others and manage themselves in order to communicate their beliefs and feelings to others.

Responsible Citizens with respect for others and able to understand different beliefs and cultures and develop informed, ethical views of complex issues through participation in a French Eco-club.

Effective Contributors with resilience and an enterprising attitude and able to work in partnership and in teams in order to produce video information about their school and to perform as part of 'Les Rencontres Théâtrales'.

Background

About the educational establishment and the learners: Mearns Primary School is a large primary school in East Renfrewshire. Children learn French from the infant classes, mainly through games and songs until the upper school when their learning is more systematic and there is greater development of language skills. As well as a number of trained MLPS teachers on the staff, the school is fortunate to have a full time Modern Languages specialist who coordinates the ML programme and the input from the Foreign Language Assistant.

Project aims

The main objectives of this project:

It was envisaged that through interaction with the FLA the pupils would:

- gain a wider appreciation of French culture.
- develop good pronunciation skills.
- develop a sound understanding of the structures underpinning the French language in preparation for moving on to secondary school.
- develop confidence in communicating with native speakers.
- collaborate with others to produce video information in French about the school.

Learning experiences:

It was envisaged that through working with the FLA learners would experience:

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- **increased enjoyment and confidence in using the foreign language to communicate meaningfully with a native speaker and with each other.**
- **greater understanding of aspects of another culture and of how it relates to their own.**
- **enjoyment through collaborating in a number of initiatives in which the FLA played an active part.**

Process

Preparation and Planning

Because of the large number of pupils in the school and the fact that she is only deployed in the school for two hours per week, the FLA's time is limited and is allocated by the ML specialist in consultation with class teachers. It is then the responsibility of the FLA to liaise with the class teachers to provide as relevant and meaningful a programme for the pupils as possible. As part of a wider cultural initiative, the FLA prepared a number of power point presentations for use with a variety of classes.

The Role of the Foreign Language Assistant

As well as the duties undertaken as part of the ML programme, the Foreign Language Assistant contributed to the wider school community in the following ways:

- producing and presenting a number of power points about her home area and festivals and traditional events in the French calendar. Presentations are in English for the younger learners and in French for the P6 and P7 classes. [Brest - Français.ppt](#)

Bienvenue à Brest



- demonstrating to pupils how to make pancakes to celebrate Mardi Gras.
- setting up a French Eco-club at lunchtime for the children to discuss environmental issues which affect France and Scotland.
- preparing a presentation with a group of infants for 'Les Rencontres Théâtrales'.
- helping pupils to decode and to write emails as part of an e-twinning programme with a school in France.
- working with pupils on a video about the school for potential partner schools.
- working within other areas of the primary curriculum, for example, in number work with a P5 class and helping children design and make Christmas cards with a French theme. [NOËL.ppt](#) [Christmas cards.bmp](#)

NOËL



EN

FRANCE

Impact

Impact on pupils

The pupils have been clearly interested by issues which affect their quality of life, such as the environment which they can compare with the French experience (responsible citizens).

Pupils show increased awareness of traditions and ways of life in another country (responsible citizens).

Through using the language to correspond with pupils in a link school in France pupils are more confident in communicating with native speakers (confident individuals, effective contributors).

Pupils have gained confidence in collaborating successfully to plan and present a video of their school using a variety of languages (successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors).

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Impact on staff

All the members of staff in the school have expressed great satisfaction not only with the work that the FLA has done in class, but also with the contribution she has made to the whole school in terms of raising awareness of environmental issues and also of similarities and differences in the French and Scottish way of life and in the traditions of the two countries. 'It's amazing that she has got so much involvement out of the children in such a short time'.

Impact on Parents and Community

Parents have commented favourably about the impact that the FLA has had on their children's learning and about the increased cultural knowledge their children display about France. The parents are also very supportive of the e-twinning link with the French school

Next Steps

It is hoped that next school year there will be more FLA time allocated for use in the primary school which has benefited enormously from having exposure to a native speaker. 'The FLA has added so much value to the pupils' language learning experience. Although most of our staff have visited France, we haven't lived there for any length of time, so we don't have detailed knowledge of the aspects of French culture that the pupils are interested in and we can't answer with confidence the sort of questions they ask the FLA.'

[Type text]

FLAs tend to be deployed mainly in secondary schools. Perhaps managers should be thinking about the contribution that FLAs can make in the primary school in terms of good pronunciation and language models while also raising awareness of other cultures and ways of life, so that when the pupils go to the secondary school, they are already open to other cultures and they have a good understanding of the language and are confident to use it to communicate.