

curriculum for excellence: modern languages

principles and practice

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Modern languages

Principles and Practice

What can learning in modern languages enable children and young people to achieve?

Learning other languages enables children and young people to make connections with different people and their cultures and to play a fuller part as global citizens.

Learning through the languages area of the curriculum enables children and young people to:

- develop their ability to communicate their thoughts and feelings and respond to those of other people
- develop the high level of skills in listening, talking, reading and writing which are essential for learning, work and life
- use different media effectively for learning and communication
- develop a secure understanding of how language works, and use language well to communicate ideas and information in English and other languages
- exercise their intellectual curiosity by questioning and developing their understanding, and use creative and critical thinking to synthesise ideas and arguments
- enhance their enjoyment and their understanding of their own and other cultures through literature and other forms of language
- develop competence in different languages so that they can understand and communicate including, for some, in work settings.

Building the Curriculum 1

It is important for the nation's prosperity that young people are attracted to learning a modern language and that they become confident users of a modern language, well equipped with the skills needed in the new Europe and in the global marketplace. This framework of experiences and outcomes is intended to help to address this national need.

Through their planning of a wide and rich range of learning activities in modern languages to develop literacy and language skills teachers will support children and young people to become:

- **successful learners**, who can reflect on how they have acquired and learned their first language and how this can assist them in further language learning
- **confident individuals**, who, through experiencing success and support, can interact with others in real-life situations, talk about topics of personal interest and deliver presentations in their new language
- **effective contributors**, who can work in individual, paired and group situations, and establish and maintain contact with other speakers of the target language
- **responsible citizens**, who have a growing awareness of life in another society and of the issues facing citizens in the countries where their new language is spoken.

The ability to use language lies at the centre of thinking and learning. The interconnected nature of language learning lies at the heart of the modern languages experiences and outcomes.

By the time they begin their study of a modern language in primary 1, learners will have acquired their home language(s) and will be beginning to study English in a school context. Teachers are in an ideal position to help children build the target language alongside their understanding of English and in other home or community languages and to help them to learn a new language (for example, how to listen, speak, read, write and how to understand phonics), and how this will help them to learn a new language. However, the learning of a new language also provides the opportunity to help learners to reflect on their first language and actively seek comparisons between the features of their first and second languages. In this way, teachers delivering modern languages have a unique contribution to make in helping learners not only to reflect on the skills required to learn a new language, but also to revisit, improve and understand more securely aspects of literacy in their first language.

Learning a modern language provides children and young people with a means of communicating directly with others from different backgrounds enhancing their understanding and enjoyment of other cultures and of their own. They gain insights into other ways of thinking and other views of the world and therefore develop a much richer understanding of their roles as global citizens.

One of the key aims of modern languages teaching is to develop young people's 'communicative competence' so that they are able to use and enjoy the language effectively in real situations and see language learning as offering valuable skills for life and work

How is the modern languages framework structured?

The introductory statements for modern languages highlight three key aims of learning modern languages which make a unique contribution to the aims of Curriculum for Excellence: the interconnected nature of languages, global citizenship and communicative competence.

The experiences and outcomes for modern languages are described at first, second, third and fourth levels. In their planning and implementation of 'Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 Approach', schools and centres should be providing children and young people with stimulating language learning opportunities with breadth and depth of learning in the first additional language (L2) in order to achieve second level by primary seven (for most and earlier for some). This approach should also incorporate appropriate L3 (second additional language) learning experiences starting no later than primary five, through to primary seven.

In secondary schools, there should be opportunities for young people to build on their language learning through their entitlement to a language learning experience until the end of the Broad General Education (BGE) in their L2. Young people are also entitled to have an L3 experience at some point within the BGE. In the senior phase, young people should be able to study more than one additional language to the level of a National Qualification.

It is imperative that secondary schools and centres take into account children's prior learning in the modern language(s) they have acquired at primary school. Secondary modern languages teachers should work closely with primary colleagues to ensure that learners continue to build on the language learning skills they have acquired throughout their primary experience.

In order to make clear the links between learning in English, Gaelic, Gàidhlig and modern languages, the experiences and outcomes in all of these areas are organised within the same structure. The organisers are:

- listening and talking
- reading
- writing.

Experiences and outcomes within each organiser are subdivided to group together similar skills. Teachers will use these lines of development to support and track progression in each skill across the four levels.

The level of achievement at the fourth level has been designed to approximate to that associated with SCQF level 4.

Which learning and teaching approaches are useful in modern languages?

How does the framework promote effective teaching and learning where children start their learning of a modern language from primary 1?

As part of 'Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 approach', children will begin learning their first additional language from primary 1. The focus here will be to embed the target language through class daily routines, such as register taking, school lunch checks, songs and rhymes as well as building on learners' natural curiosity about language and moving onto appropriately challenging contexts for language learning etc.

Teachers will draw on a wide and varied range of approaches including:

- active learning and planned, purposeful play
- the development of problem-solving skills
- the use of appropriate contexts and experiences familiar to children and young people
- embedding ICT in all learning and teaching
- building on the principles of Assessment is for Learning
- developing children and young people's understanding of how they have acquired and learned their first language and how this relates to their study of languages.

At early and at first levels, children will be developing generic skills in their first language. These include taking part in conversations, developing listening, reading and writing skills and knowledge about language. All of these are relevant to learning other languages. Teachers will build on children's natural curiosity for sounds and words, and their strong desire to communicate by planning activities which include playing games, singing songs, carrying out simple instructions, and playing with simple poetry and rhyme. In this way, children can begin to be enthusiastic and confident language learners.

Whenever they start their learning of another language, children need to experience success by taking part in practical activities that they can enjoy. Language learning is greatly enhanced where it is linked to or embedded in the wider curriculum so that children and young people can enjoy exploring and using language in meaningful contexts and can relate their language learning to other work across the curriculum. Very importantly, teachers can make great use of opportunities to link language learning with progress in English, Gàidhlig and with other languages. From P5 at the latest, children will begin learning a second additional language (L3). This can be delivered in a number of ways and will enable children to explore and experiment with sound patterns and make links and comparisons between languages, including languages used in the school community.

What does the framework mean more generally for teachers?

Language learning provides opportunities to create relevant, coherent, enjoyable and successful learning experiences which include the following four elements:

- awareness of the skills required to be an effective learner of languages
- awareness of social, cultural and geographical aspects of the countries where a particular language is spoken
- knowledge about language structures that allows the learner to check the accuracy of her/his language use and to create new language
- the ability to communicate in relevant and realistic contexts.

As children and young people develop their modern language skills, teachers will plan to achieve an appropriate balance between the development of language learning skills and the development of competence in the new language. This may involve changing the balance of these four elements: the first two of these elements - listening and talking - being more predominant in the earlier stages of language learning and the second two - reading and writing - playing a more predominant role in the later stages. Appropriate, regular formal language learning input will be needed at all stages in order to ensure learners acquire a greater depth of understanding beyond embedding. This could be for example a five minute slot with primary 1 children to learn some new vocabulary or a ten to fifteen minute slot to highlight an aspect of grammar such as awareness of adjectival agreement in primary 4.

The statements of experiences and outcomes provide support to primary teachers as they plan to:

- establish a solid basis for the lifelong learning of modern languages
- ensure careful planning and delivery of high quality learning experiences in order that children experience success and retain initial enthusiasm
- achieve balance between coverage of language content and development of effective language learning skills
- discuss similarities and differences of how pupils have acquired and learned their first or home language and how this impacts on the learning of a second language
- encourage young people to investigate and report back on aspects of culture and geography.

As teachers use these statements of experiences and outcomes to support their planning, by the end of Primary 7, most children will have learned the skills necessary to:

- give a short presentation about themselves or a topic of their interest in the target language.
- take part in conversations and transactions with confidence – including asking for and giving information from /to others.
- understand and respond with increasing depth to a wide range of instructions and personal information
- enjoy listening to a story, song or poem appropriate for their age and stage
- read aloud a simple text with confidence, showing understanding of pronunciation rules
- read, understand and select information from a variety of texts
- using appropriate support eg a bi-lingual dictionary or other resource, write with reasonable accuracy on topics of interest to them. This could include a wide range of texts such as blogs, emails or writing frames.
- have an increasing awareness of intercultural differences and their role as a global citizen.

By embedding the principles of Assessment is for Learning within their classrooms, teachers will encourage young people to reflect on, to take increasing ownership of and to assume more responsibility for their own learning; they will make use of self-assessment to identify their strengths and development needs from the evidence of their efforts and act on feedback given from peers as well as teachers in order to plan their next steps.

The statements of experiences and outcomes provide support to secondary teachers as they plan to:

- create meaningful relevant contexts for learning including the appropriate use of ICT
- develop interdisciplinary projects where appropriate to build on collaborative learning
- make clear the links between the learning and teaching of modern languages and other areas of the young people's learning, including enterprise, international education, employability, citizenship, and sustainability.
- establish an acceptable level of competence approximating to SCQF Level 4 and achievable by most pupils by end of S3.

How can effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) help to improve learning and teaching?

Curriculum for Excellence offers an opportunity to further develop learning and teaching experiences that are relevant and enjoyable. This includes making effective use of information and communication technology to enhance teaching and learning, and to provide real-life contexts that motivate children and young people and help them to see a purpose to their language learning. Online research by teachers and learners alike will help them to develop their knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the culture surrounding the language which they are learning, and the use of ICT can bring them directly into contact with people from around the world.

Will the framework help to address the need for our young people to be equipped with high levels of language learning skills? Are we 'raising the bar' in terms of what we expect from our learners?

We are certainly raising the bar to the extent that, without placing a 'ceiling' on higher levels of achievement, we expect the majority of young people to achieve by the end of S3 a level of performance in each language skill which approximates to the level of performance associated with SCQF level 4. The achievement of fourth level outcomes represents a substantial and useful level of competence closely linked to Basic User level on the Common European Framework for Languages (CEFR).

How do we support progression through and between levels?

The experiences and outcomes for modern languages are described at first, second, third and fourth levels. The outcomes embody an appropriate level of proficiency at each level but do not place a ceiling on achievement. The range of experiences within the framework allows for different rates of progression.

Within the modern languages framework young people will demonstrate their progression as they move through levels in terms of:

- increasing independence and reduced level of support, including peer or teacher support, and support through picture prompts, wordlists and bi-lingual dictionaries etc.
- increasing length and complexity of text and task in listening and reading
- increasing length, complexity and accuracy of response in talking and writing
- new areas of language content and language use (personal, transactional, language related to the world of work and to the culture of the countries in which the language is spoken)
- increasing awareness of language rules, including knowledge about language
- increasing confidence in taking the initiative (including asking for help) and sustaining communication.

What are broad features of assessment in modern languages?

Assessment in modern languages will focus on children and young people's progress in developing and applying their skills in listening, talking, reading and writing.

Teachers can gather evidence of progress as part of day-to-day learning during individual and collaborative activities, for example engaging in relevant conversation or correspondence with peers and adults about people, places and daily life where the language is spoken, and through talks, writing, and presentations, using ICT as appropriate. Specific assessment tasks will also be valuable in assessing progress. From the time when children and young people begin their learning of a modern language through to the senior stages, they will demonstrate progress in their skills in communication and language learning, in their knowledge about language structure, and in their awareness of social, cultural and geographical aspects.

Approaches to assessment should identify the extent to which children and young people can apply these skills in their learning and their daily lives and in preparing for the world of work. For example:

- How well do they contribute to discussions?
- Are they increasingly able to extract key information from texts?

Assessment of progress in modern languages involves making judgements about the success of children and young people in extending and using their vocabulary, increasing their comprehension of the written and spoken word, developing their understanding of language structures and rules and applying these accurately in familiar and new real-life situations, including in social contexts or in giving instructions or directions. For example, they:

- communicate with increasing confidence, accuracy and fluency
- demonstrate through responses their enthusiasm and motivation for modern language learning and their developing cultural and international awareness.

Assessment should promote enthusiasm, motivation and willingness to try out the language in other areas of the curriculum and beyond school. These will be indicators of children and young people's long-term success as modern language learners and global citizens. Further guidance can be found in the professional learning paper: *Assessing progress and achievement in Modern Languages*

How much time should schools devote to teaching modern languages?

Although there are no specific input requirements in terms of the time to be allocated to languages over S1 to S3, the L3 experience within the secondary context should be *in addition to* and not *at the expense of* the time given to the study of L2.

Through embedding the language in day to day working and school routines as well as through regular appropriate formal inputs of language learning, practitioners will ensure that each learner achieves an acceptable level of proficiency in the language. This level of proficiency is linked to Basic User Level of the CEFR.

Curriculum for Excellence allows for both professional autonomy and responsibility when planning and delivering the curriculum... The framework provides flexibility to organise, schedule and deliver the experiences and outcomes in ways that meet the needs of all learners, but also provides reassurance about consistency where necessary.

Such flexibility will result in a more varied pattern of curriculum structures to reflect local needs and circumstances.

Building the Curriculum 3

Connections with other areas of the curriculum

The study of any modern language plays a central role in the development of literacy skills. It can also contribute to the development of numeracy skills through, for example, learning and exploring the use of the number system in a new language. Learning a modern language provides opportunities for interdisciplinary work by providing a global dimension to a variety of curriculum areas and, particularly, to the areas of active citizenship and cultural awareness. Making connections between different areas of learning and developing relevant course content will be important in attracting our young people to learning a modern language.

Connections with other frameworks for language learning

The framework provides an opportunity for children and young people's achievement to be recognised at first, second, third and fourth levels. The level of achievement at fourth level is broadly equivalent to that associated with Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 4.

Curriculum for Excellence levels have been linked to those being developed as part of the CEFR so that the level of competence achieved by learners will have a European-wide equivalence. The CEFR comprehensively describes what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and defines levels of proficiency which allow learners' progress to be measured at each stage of learning on a lifelong basis.

References:

Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 Approach

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2012/05/3670>

Further Guidance on L3

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/L3SupplementaryGuidance160215_tcm4-852848.pdf

Assessing progress and achievement in Modern Languages:

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/ModernLanguages012014_tcm4-744656.pdf

Common European Framework for Languages (CEFR)

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Cadre1_en.asp