

Promoting modern languages in the Senior Phase

Case Study: St Ninian's High School

St Ninian's High School - East Dunbartonshire Council

School Roll: 759

Principal teacher: Diane Stokoe

Context of the department:

There are four full time members of staff in the department and one part-time member of staff. All are French and Spanish specialists. The school has had a Confucius Hub since 2009. Since 2011, the department has also had one full time teacher of Mandarin. This teacher is deployed in the associated primaries, as well as in one other secondary school in the authority.

Curricular structure:

The school has a 33 period week and operates a broad general education phase from S1 to S3, and a senior phase from S4 to S6. Young people in S1 to S3 have three x 50 minute periods per week for modern languages.

Prior to 2011, young people would spend half the year studying either French or Spanish and would then change to the other language for the second half of the school year. This was reviewed in 2011 and changed to ensure continuity and depth of learning. . As a result since 2012, S1 and S2 experience both languages continuously. The weighting changes in S2.

Either

In S1 two periods of French and one of Spanish

In S2 one period of French and two of Spanish

Or

In S1 one period of French and two of Spanish

In S2 two periods of French and one of Spanish

Inserts of Mandarin are integrated into the S1 to S2 curriculum.

In the opinion of staff, young people have had sufficient experience in both languages to make an informed decision at the end of S2. Young people choose either French **or** Spanish **or** Mandarin for S3. Mandarin has a low uptake.

In 2014-15 there were two French classes and three Spanish classes.

Uptake:

In the current S4, 63% of the cohort have opted to continue their language to National Qualification level. There are currently two French classes with 28 young people and two Spanish with 48 young people.

In S5 and S6, 18 young people are studying Higher French with a further 16 choosing Higher Spanish.

The department has become a local hub for Advanced Higher French and Spanish, with a number of candidates across the local authority attending Advanced Higher classes at St Ninian's High School.

Approaches to assessment:

The department has increased its use of ICT and young people regularly peer assess outcomes for talking using iPads. Young people are able to work independently and in groups, and they use feedback to improve their performance in talking. All young people have a folder from S1 to S3 containing peer and self-assessment profiles, as well as other class work and assessments. This allows staff to track young people's progress through the experiences and outcomes.

Using feedback from pupils:

The department uses 'SurveyMonkey' on a regular basis to gather the views of young people and their parents /carers about the work of the department. The questionnaires contain questions from 'How Good Is Our School?' as well as other particular areas of interest for the department, such as a reviewing a unit of work

These results are analysed and discussed at department meetings and the action points identified feed into the department improvement plan.

Activities within the department:

The department has a number of language events in the whole school calendar. For example, in S2 young people had a languages quiz in the autumn term, which the department hopes will become an annual event. Here the young people spend two periods working in house teams on aspects of the modern language, as well as wider cultural knowledge. In October, there is an annual modern languages event, again for young people in S2, where a 'carousel' of activities in the modern languages is on offer. Film studies feature in the courses for S1 to S3.

Outwith the classroom:

Young people are given regular opportunities throughout the year to visit the Glasgow Film Theatre for screenings of French and Spanish films. There is an annual visit to a local French restaurant for S3 pupils. All S2 to S4 pupils are offered a week long language immersion visit to France or Spain. In addition, senior pupils attend the annual multi-lingual debate at Heriot-Watt University.

Cluster working:

The school has five associated primary schools.

There is a long standing programme of liaison with the cluster primaries and over the last five years, one member of the modern languages staff has worked regularly with primaries five, six and seven, leading the learning and planning the delivery of lessons on a four-weekly basis with the class teacher. There are robust transition arrangements in place from P7 to S1, which allows learning to progress coherently from primary into secondary school.

The cluster group is working on their planning for 1+2 languages. The L2 is likely to be French but options are still being explored and the final decision will be made on a cluster basis. Pupils already have exposure to two languages until the end of S2.

Pupil Voice:

The pupil focus group consisted of eleven girls and two boys.

There were four young people from S4, four from S5 and five from S6.

Pupils were asked to consider two aspects of their language learning:

- Learning experiences in S1 to S3
- Reasons for continuing a language into the senior phase.

Learning experiences in S1 to S3:

Most pupils felt that the experience with specialist practitioners in high school brought the language to life. Some stated it also gave them a better understanding of English. Film studies as part of courses were motivational and all believed the greater depth in S3 was a positive experience. Exposure to cultural aspects of the language, such as plays and celebration of foreign traditions, was appreciated, as well as lunches and other activities.

Young people said they were not just learning a language but also learning about the culture of the country. All felt that the chance to learn a language was also appealing. Young people enjoyed the exposure to two languages.

Why choose to take a language into the senior phase?

The young people interviewed were very clear about their reasons for continuing their language learning. Almost all believed their language knowledge would be an advantage in any future career. Several young people said that learning a language makes you more employable. Most felt that knowing only English would limit their future prospects.

Many said that languages were a good qualification for travel and employment. Some expressed the desire to continue a language with a university course such as business. Some felt that the ability to speak to others in a foreign language enhanced their own communication skills. All felt having a language would have long term benefits for their future life careers and some said they felt that their best skills came to the fore in modern languages, by having a positive impact on their ability to communicate in other subject areas, such as English and Social Subjects.