

A Case Study from Belfast High School

Creating a cross - phase, cross – curricular approach to languages

Key Stage 3 Modern Languages



The Languages Village

Aim:

To outline the development and the management of our first Language Village and to evaluate its success and effectiveness within our own school and our primary and community partners.

Objectives:

- To develop a project to promote language learning and share good practice within our own school, our feeder primary schools and our community partner groups.
- To encourage cross-curricular co-operation between several departments, highlighting the fact that learning a language does not have to be restricted exclusively to the Language Classroom.
- To give pupils at Key Stage 2 and our local community the opportunity to acquire language skills and encourage them to use to complete language tasks for real purposes.
- To show the advantages and highlight the enjoyment gained from language learning.
- To increase opportunities for the acquisition of skills which are central to the revised curriculum and which give language learning a 'real life purpose'.



Planning

As a specialist Languages college, we wanted to host a one-day Languages event that allowed participants to use their Target Language skills in a variety of curricular contexts and develop their skills and capabilities. After some discussion, we decided on creating a Breton village and inviting pupils from our school, local primaries and visitors from the local community to take part in activities in the village in French. The village would be composed of six main areas – a café, bank, art gallery, village square, theatre and tourist office. All visitors would pass through a passport control when they arrived at the village. They would have tasks to complete in the Target Language at each area and on completion of the task would receive a sticker for their passport.

The proposal was presented to the Heads of Department. It was discussed and agreed that the cross-curricular theme would be implemented across all the areas of Year 8 and 10 pupils. Materials were prepared by the Languages Department for both Key Stage 2 and 3 pupils to ensure they would be able to participate fully at the event.

Primary and community partners were informed in advance about the Language Village and were asked to confirm their interest in taking part. Eight primary schools registered their interest, and as a result 120 pupils were invited for a two-hour session in the morning and a further 120 invited to the afternoon session.



Cross-Curricular Collaboration

The major success of this project was the collaboration between departments which made the experience rewarding for the whole school community. It also raised the profile of languages in the school, providing opportunities for both primary and post-primary pupils to communicate in the Target Language for real purposes.

The Art Department chose 'Gauguin' as their link with Brittany and pupils were taught about the artist and his style of painting. Information and samples were sent to the primary partners so that the pupils could have the opportunity to enter an art competition and their entries would be exhibited on the day. The Art Department also set up their own art gallery and organised a 'hands-on' activity for the visitors. Senior pupils of French assisted the staff involved in talking about the artist and the materials and colours used in French.

The Business Studies Department produced publicity materials for the event and established contact with one local trader specialising in French products who accepted the invitation to promote the products at the village.

The Classics Department developed activities and resources for our partners which would highlight the connections between Latin and French.

The vocabulary incorporated within the activities was used in a play which was performed by Year 8 at the village theatre.

The English and Geography Departments worked in collaboration and challenged Year 8 pupils to research Brittany on the Internet and to design brochures for the tourist office.

The Home Economics Department investigated Bretonne cuisine with Year 8 and taught the pupils how to make a crêpe. Crêpières were purchased and a member of staff from Modern Languages and one from Home Economics worked to devise lessons where the Year 8 pupils learned the ingredients and instructions for the recipe in French. Team-teaching was used to present the lessons to the pupils. The pupils prepared the dish and cooked crêpes using the crêpière. They also set up and ran a café at the event. Senior pupils assisted the staff in preparing the crêpes and demonstrating how to use the equipment.

The Mathematics Department created a French bank and provided resources on numeracy and using the euro. Year 8 pupils studied the euro and how to work out exchange rates in class. Pupils role- played exchanging sterling for euros.

The Modern Languages Department appointed a link teacher for each of the other departments who were working on the project. The link teacher helped staff with the language needed for their area and gave guidance for developing resources and activities.

The department also played a role in ensuring that our own pupils had ample opportunities to practise their language skills. Each pupil who attended the event received a Breton passport which they had to complete beforehand with guidance from their teacher.

In order to enter the village the visitors passed through passport control. The passport control was supervised by Year 8 pupils who had the task of welcoming the visitors, asking them for personal details in French and stamping their passport.

Year 10 pupils completed a course in class centred on employability. They were taught how to research jobs on offer in France, how to present themselves at an interview and then how to work as a waiter/waitress in a French café. Pupils from this year group were then selected to work as

waiters and waitresses at the event where they were able to use the skills acquired in the classroom setting.

Year 11 pupils were chosen to act as guides for the visitors. They had to accompany them to the various events at the village and had to encourage them to speak in French.

Primary school visitors with the passports they had completed before attending the village.

The Music Department worked with Breton dance and music teacher who had been invited to our school to complete workshops with Year 8. Songs were selected and the pupils learned these in class and performed them at the event.

The P.E. Department collaborated with a Breton dance tutor to deliver workshops on dance and song with Year 8. Dances were performed at the event in the village square and the visitors were invited to learn the routines and participate in the performances. There was also an area for playing boules as it was anticipated that some visitors might be reluctant to join in the dancing.

The Technology Department played a key role in co-ordinating the design of the set for the village and in producing props and decorations for numerous areas.

Benefits for pupils and partners:



The personal development of all the pupils involved in the project was enhanced greatly, as the cross-curricular theme gave them the opportunity to develop and to improve a variety of skills. Mutual understanding was also encouraged through elements of the project which centred on the culture of Brittany and which required pupils to work with others. The lessons and activities organised for the event created links between subjects that promoted the implementation and development of a number of thinking skills. Pupils discovered that language learning involves much more than learning the linguistic elements in the Modern Language classroom. They saw that for language learning to be successful, the language cannot be learned in isolation from other curriculum areas.

By asking pupils to produce publicity and promotional materials for several areas of the village we were encouraging them to manage information, to think and make decisions about content and to be aware of self-management when setting about their task.

Creativity was also central to the project. Several subject areas challenged the pupils to experiment with their ideas in the production of artwork and leaflets. Opportunities were given for pupils to express their feelings and emotions through art, music and drama. The improvement of practical skills featured in the input from Home Economics and ICT.

The event allowed pupils to achieve many of the objectives surrounding Learning for Life and Work whilst running the crêperie, pupils were able to identify what the careers of chef and waiting staff involved and understand the importance of customer care. They realised the importance of time

management and developed practical skills in the food preparation. They also appreciated the importance of team effort in any business.

The lessons prepared for our partner primary schools aimed to get them involved in the activities in the village and help them develop skills central to the revised curriculum. The lessons were focused on making them think, make connections, encouraged them to communicate, to be creative and to enhance their skills in numeracy. The activities offered to them at the village enabled them to work with others, to demonstrate their creativity, to express themselves in music and dance and to develop presentational skills.



Evaluation

Based on the response from pupils, staff, visitors and partners in the community, the event was very successful. Our pupils were enthusiastic about the project because of the central role they played in its organisation and management. They were thrilled to be given responsibility and to have an active role. They soon realised that the success of the event depended on how they behaved and on their communication skills. Their attitude to language learning has improved as they realised the benefits that the knowledge of a Modern Language bestows (particularly in the development of personal skills and in employability). They also commented on the fact that the recreation of a village made the experience real and that their role made the exercise valid for them.

Our partners in Primary Schools and the Local Community also responded most positively to the event. Their language skills enabled them to participate actively in 'village' life, this made the event meaningful and enjoyable for them. Their sense of achievement was enhanced when they were able to complete simple but realistic tasks in the target language.

Discussions with Heads of Departments have highlighted areas for improvement regarding logistics, facilities for guests and the preparation offered to primary schools.

However, the overall opinion was that it was a very valuable event which had a positive impact in our school and helped forge good relationships with our primary partners. Furthermore, the event brought together a wide variety of

departments within the school and provided real purposes to communicate in the target language for both primary and post-primary pupils.