

Alex Begg and Queen Margaret Academy



SCILT's Business Language Champions programme helps schools and businesses to build exciting and sustainable partnerships that equip young people with the international communication and employability skills they need for their future careers.

Background



Queen Margaret Academy is a six year comprehensive Roman Catholic school serving the district of South Ayrshire and certain adjacent parts of East Ayrshire – a wide area which includes Ayr, Prestwick, Troon, Tarbolton, Dalmellington, Maybole and Girvan. The school roll is approximately 600.

At Queen Margaret Academy, learners study French during the broad general education. The department also offers French and Spanish to pupils in S1 to S6. Mandarin is taught as part of an elective to S1, S2 pupils and S6 pupils.

Further information about the school can be found on the [Queen Margaret Academy website](#).

Aims

The project with Alex Begg gives the young people in S1 a real and engaging context for their learning and provides them with an insight into the world of work. It shows them how the learning of a language can enhance their career prospects as well as developing their skills for learning, life and work.

Partners

Alex Begg

Alex Begg is a textile company which produces luxurious cashmere scarves and throws for the Begg & Co brand as well as for some of the world's most prestigious fashion houses. The company has a long history which began in 1866 when the company began making scarves in Paisley before moving to Ayr in 1902.

The company exports to countries around the world and as such requires people with language skills.

Find out more on the [Alex Begg website](#).

Project

The partners worked together to devise a project that would enhance the teaching and learning of Chinese in the S1 curriculum. As pupils were just beginning their studies in Chinese, it seemed appropriate to use the project to introduce and practice personal language.

The project was launched by the Human Resources Assistant and the Design and Sales Director, who visited the school to speak to all S1 classes.

The young people were given an insight into the textile industry and the company as well as the range of employment opportunities available. The staff spoke about the value of learning languages for the world of work. They emphasised that not only do languages help you to communicate with people from other countries, but the skills you develop when learning a language can be used in a wide range of jobs and industries. They also spoke about the importance of having the right attitude towards work by being positive, resilient and willing to learn. Pupils were given the opportunity to admire and try on some of the luxurious scarves and shawls that had the staff had brought with them.

The pupils responded very positively and were extremely enthusiastic about the visitors.

Help cards

The pupils were then tasked with creating help cards for the sales team at Alex Begg to use when they visit China on business. Pupils worked with their teacher to identify useful vocabulary for the staff to help them to introduce themselves and start to build relationships with colleagues in China. They presented the vocabulary, meaning and pronunciation on the help cards, and the best cards were chosen by the staff at Alex Begg.

“Thank you so much to all students who have submitted their project work to us. We have had fun trying to pronounce some of the sayings. It was difficult to pick one out-right winner so we picked three.” (Human Resources Assistant, Alex Begg)

- [Winning help card 1](#)
- [Winning help card 2](#)
- [Winning help card 3](#)

The winning groups were treated to a tour of the company where they saw at first-hand how the beautiful scarves and shawls are produced.

“I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to Beggs. I learned the detailed steps in creating a scarf and I was amazed by the time and effort Beggs take in making a top quality scarf. The tour was great and extremely interesting” (S1 pupil)

我非常喜欢去BEEG的这次参观，我学到了制作围巾的详尽的工序，同时也被BEGG 公司制作高质量围巾的努力所震惊。这次旅行非常好，也非常的有趣。

(Chinese translation)



Impact

Learners enjoyed the experience. They were engaged in the different activities offered and the project made the context they were studying much more engaging and relevant.

“I really enjoyed going round the factory because I enjoyed learning about how they make the scarves and about the different processes they need to go through. My favourite part was looking at the way they are weaved.” (S1 pupil)

我非常喜欢参观这个工厂，因为我很享受学习他们是如何制作围巾以及中间需要经过的不同工序。我最喜欢的部分是进入到他们进行纺织的一个声音很大的房间里，因为我喜欢看他们是如何纺织的，同时我也非常享受观看最后的扫描工作。

(Chinese translation)

The staff thought the project was a great opportunity for the learners to see the relevance of learning Chinese and agreed that it had been very worthwhile.



Next steps

The staff at Queen Margaret Academy would like to continue to promote languages to learners in this way.

“I am still on a high after our tour this morning. It was certainly a good promotional tool [for languages] because we are all talking so positively about it. The pupils came back to my classroom afterwards and were talking all about it. We would be so keen to continue this business link. It is so valuable to the pupils to have an insight into the world of work. We can talk about it to a certain extent in school but our trip this morning was invaluable.”

(Principal Teacher, on return from the visit to the company)

The staff at Alex Begg & Co also benefited from the project and are very keen to continue working with the school. They have suggested developing the project for the next session, and have asked the school to consider developing a phrase-book instead of simply help card.

“I will be taking the cards to China on my next visit in the autumn! Good work from and thank you to all the pupils.” (Sales and Marketing Director)