

Walkers Shortbread and Elgin 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

Elgin Academy is situated in Moray and has 1032 pupils. The school serves a mixed catchment area in the town of Elgin. There are five associated primary schools which, together with Elgin Academy, form the Associated Schools Group. The school has an IDL working group made up of teachers from across the school.

All S2 pupils at Elgin Academy learn Chinese, taught by a Chinese exchange teacher. They also learn about Chinese culture.

For more information on the school, visit the [Elgin Academy website](#).

Aims

The project with Walkers Shortbread gives the pupils in S2 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. It also highlights how important languages are in the food and drink industry, and the importance of this industry to the Scottish economy.

Partners

CISS/SCILT and the Modern Languages Department at Elgin Academy worked in partnership with the staff at Walkers Shortbread in Aberlour.

Walkers Shortbread

Walkers Shortbread is a family run business founded in 1898. It is situated in the town of Aberlour in the Spey valley and bakes an extensive range of pure butter shortbreads. They also make traditionally baked oatcakes and fruit cakes. The distinctive tartan means the name Walkers Shortbread is recognised across the world. More information on Walkers Shortbread is available [on their website](#).

Project

The partners worked together to devise a project that would enhance the learning and teaching of Chinese in S2, with the aim of making it more meaningful and relevant. Because

the International Sales Team at Walkers Shortbread conduct business with China, the partners decided to create an opportunity for learners to share with the team their knowledge of Chinese language and culture.

To launch the project, the Export Executive at Walkers Shortbread visited the school to speak to the pupils about the company. They learned that Walkers Shortbread exports to over 100 countries and has seven different languages on its shortbread packaging, highlighting that knowledge of languages can be extremely relevant in the workplace.

Pupils were tasked with creating cue cards for the Walkers Shortbread International Sales Team to use on future trips to China. The cue cards had to be in Chinese. They then worked with the Chinese teacher to create the content for these cue cards, carrying out research in their own time.

“Linking a local business with a school benefited my teaching. I found the pupils were very keen to practice what they had learnt.” (Selena Liu, Chinese exchange teacher)

She also noticed that the pupils were far more engaged and motivated to learn more than the bare essentials set out by the task. Moreover, they extended their knowledge of grammar and learnt how to address people formally and informally in Chinese. The teacher had not expected the pupils to do this and this raised her own expectations of what the pupils can do.

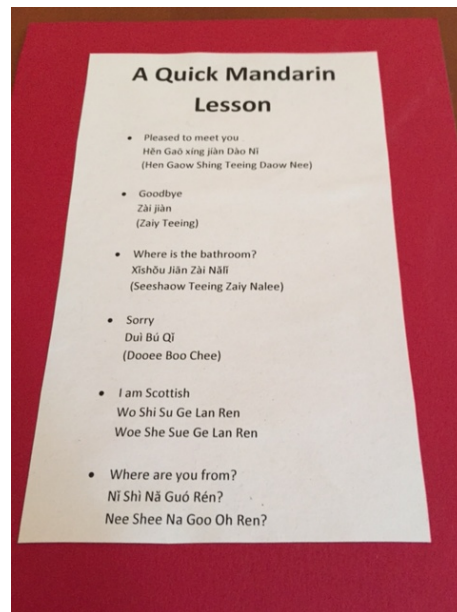
To conclude the project, the young people created presentations to support the work they had done on their cue cards, in readiness for a visit to Walkers Shortbread in May 2016. These presentations were to be pitched directly to the International Sales Team.

Presentation at Walkers Shortbread HQ

The school selected five groups of pupils to present to a panel of judges from the International Sales Team and staff from Human Resources. The young people were picked up by Walkers Shortbread minibus from Elgin Academy and welcomed on arrival at Aberlour House, Walkers Shortbread headquarters.



During the presentations, in the rather grand setting of the Spey room, pupils taught the International Sales Team useful phrases for conducting business in China, which correlated with the cue cards they had created. The pupils also highlighted the importance of Chinese business etiquette and the role this plays in the business world.



One of the groups of pupils presented the International Sales Team with one of the cue cards they had developed. This was to remind them of the importance of the key points of business etiquette in China:

Business Etiquette

If you are given a business card you should never put it in your back pocket.

Hold business cards in two hands.

General Advice

Don't make eye contact.

Stay silent when eating.

Never open a gift in front of the person that gave it to you.

Never send things in fours, it means death.

When eating don't sit facing the door, it's the VIP seat.



Food

Noodle are from the north.

Spicy foods are from the middle-west.

Rice is eaten the most in the south of China.

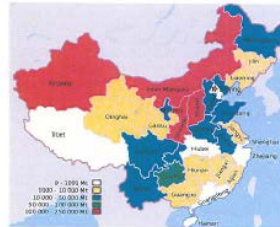
Hot pot is very popular in the middle of China, the Sichuan Province.

Culture

The national animal is the giant panda.

The national anthem is called "The March of the Volunteers"

The Chinese currency is Yuan.



Impact

Learners really enjoyed the experience. They were very enthusiastic and developed important literacy skills. The project provided a very engaging and grown up context for their language learning that the young people found motivating and relevant to their future careers:

"I thought I would freeze in front of these business people, but once started I really felt confident." (S2 pupil, Elgin Academy)



The staff at Walkers also thought the project was a great opportunity and had been very worthwhile. The staff commented that they too had learned a great deal from the partnership, not only in terms of the Chinese language, but also about the best and most respectful way to engage with valued Chinese customers.

“I have filed all my cue cards for my next trip to China and we are updating our welcome board to have a Chinese version as a result of the pupils’ visit today.” (Member of the International Sales Team)

Next steps

Walkers Shortbread and the school are keen to continue working together in the future as both partners found the experience very worthwhile. The business people felt that they had learned some interesting and useful things, particularly about business etiquette and the appropriateness of corporate gifts. The teachers felt that the experience had developed the young people’s confidence, particularly in their presentation skills and had given them an important introduction into the world of international business.