

Introduction

Authority: Fife Council
Case Study Focus: Family Learning



Establishments:

- St Joseph's RC Primary
- St Margaret's RC Primary
- St Bride's RC Primary
- Holy Name RC Primary
- St John's RC Primary
- St Kenneth's RC Primary
- King's Road Primary
- Commercial Primary
- Pitreavie Primary

All schools are in either Dunfermline High Cluster or St Columba's RC High Cluster

Learners' stage/s: P3 – P7

The project focuses on Primary 3, 4 and 5 classes in all schools with the exception of Holy Name RC Primary where all pupils in the P4-7 class were included.

About the educational establishments and the learners

Dunfermline High School

Dunfermline High School has a role of 1650 and its catchment schools range from Dunfermline to the River Forth at Rosyth and along to the village of Kincardine. Currently, 12.67% of learners are eligible for free school meal entitlement (FME).

Commercial Primary School

Commercial Primary School shares its campus with the neighbouring St Margaret's RC Primary School. The school role is 427 with 12.4% FME. 108 learners are in SIMD 1-3.

King's Road Primary School

King's Road Primary School and Nursery has a role of 543 with 19% of learners eligible for FME.

Pitreavie Primary School

Pitreavie Primary School is located within Pitcorthie estate, a private housing development in the west of Dunfermline. It has enhanced provision for children with Additional Support Needs. The role is 301 and the FME is 13.3%.

St Columba's RC High School

St Columba's RC High School is a denominational secondary school which serves the towns and villages of West Fife. Most of the pupils live in Dunfermline and the surrounding area. The school role is 850 with the FME being 17.7%.

St Margaret's RC Primary School

St Margaret's RC Primary School is a denominational school with nursery provision. The current role is 350 with an FME of 6%.

St Kenneth's RC Primary School

St Kenneth's RC Primary and Nursery School provides denominational education in the old mining villages of Ballingry, Lochore, Crosshill and Glencraig on the outskirts of Lochgelly. The role is 238 and the FME is 37%.

St John's RC Primary School

St John's RC Primary School is a denominational school and was established in 1919 to serve the areas of Rosyth and Inverkeithing. The school role is 248 with 8.9% of its learners eligible to receive FME.

Holy Name RC Primary School

Holy Name RC primary school is a denominational school which shares a campus with Inzievar Primary in Oakley. The current school role is 48 with FME of 33%. The catchment of the school consists of west Fife villages, many of them old mining villages.

St Joseph's RC Primary School

St Joseph's is a denominational primary school and is one of two primary schools in Kelty. The school has a role of 146 and the current FME is 36%.

St Bride's RC Primary School

St Bride's is a denominational primary school serving the areas of Cowdenbeath, Lumphinnans, Crossgates and Hill of Beath. The school offers early years provision. The current role is 197 with the FME currently being 22%.

Background

In Fife, there are 18 clusters with 135 primary schools. The main language taught as L2 is French although there are also schools teaching Spanish and German. There is one Development Officer for 1+2 Language Learning.

In order to build each school's capacity for language learning and teaching, staff from LFEE (Languages for Education in Europe) have delivered professional learning for teachers in French, German and Spanish. To date there have been approximately 700 teachers from Fife trained over the last three years and 100 teachers have attended immersion courses in France and Spain, funded by the British Council Erasmus+ programme. All schools in Fife have access to the PowerLanguage for Schools' (PLS) online resources.

Fife Council is committed to raising the profile of the 1+2 initiative and promoting parental engagement and family learning. Following initial discussions between the 1+2 Development Officer and the Director of PowerLanguage, an online course for families was to be piloted. The family learning project ('French for Families') was presented to two clusters who agreed to become involved.

The National Improvement Framework (NIF) Definition of Family Learning

"Family Learning encourages family members to learn together, with a focus on intergenerational learning. Family Learning activities can also be specifically designed to enable parents how to support their children's learning (at home)... 'Family learning is a powerful method of engagement and learning which can foster positive attitudes towards life-long learning, promote socio-economic resilience and challenge educational disadvantage.' (Family Learning Network, 2016)." ([Education Scotland](#), 2016).

Planning and Implementation

In summer 2016, the 'French for Families' online course was created, with the aim of developing family learning and promoting the Scottish Government's 1+2 approach to language learning within the wider school community.

The course supports parents, carers and other family members to learn French in order to complement and support the language learning which takes place in school.

The course was available to learners in Primary 3, Primary 4 and Primary 5. In total, 1059 children and their families took part in the project.

All learners and their families were invited to a launch event at the Alhambra Theatre in Dunfermline; this included a morning launch for children, teachers and some parents/carers, and an evening launch for families. Representatives from a range of partner organisations attended the launch event.



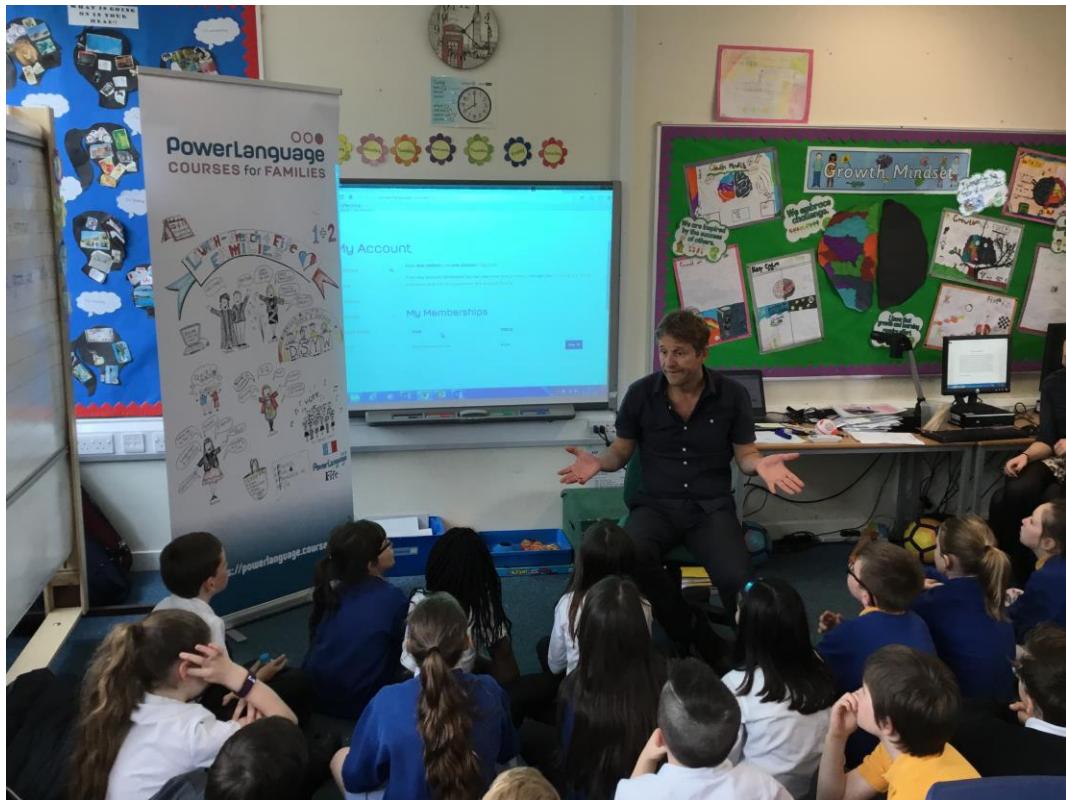
In order to raise awareness of the course, the project team liaised with the families in the pilot schools. This was achieved by:

- Visiting schools during the day, and early evening for parents' evenings, in order to engage with parents
- Distributing a range of publicity materials and providing information about the project to families, via leaflets and school newsletters

The project team considered how to ensure equity of access to the course for all families. This included:

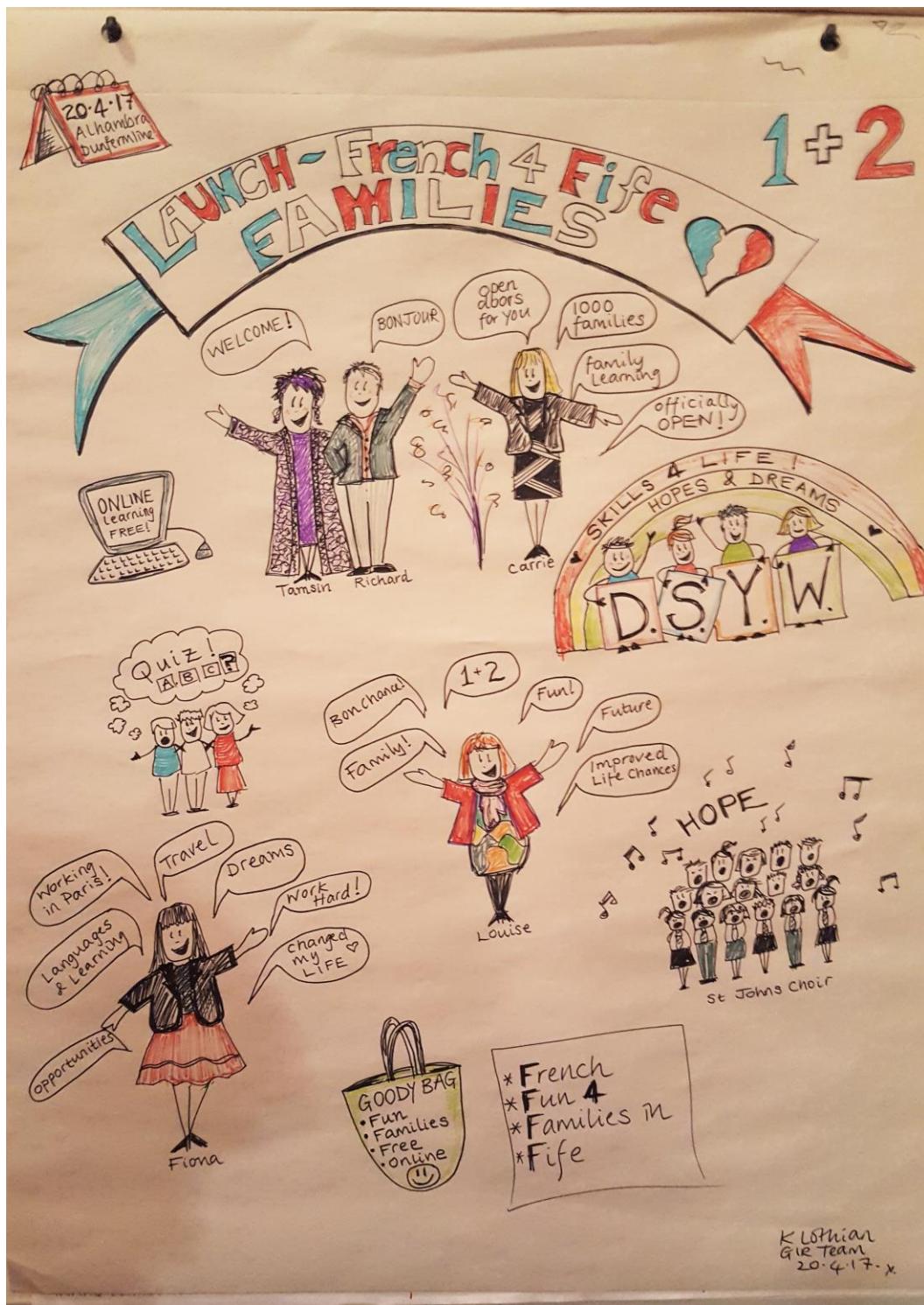
- Free access to the course materials was provided for up to five additional family members, irrespective of their place of residence
- Local libraries shared information about the course to provide families with the opportunity to access the course online using the library computers
- Some schools opened their IT suites after school to families in order to ensure access to the online resources for all

- Families were provided with paper resources and flashcards so that parents could take part in a range of activities at home



Assessment and Evaluation

- Children, parents and school staff completed baseline assessments of French language skills and attitudes towards language learning
- A sample of schools were visited mid-way through the project to review progress. Learners, parents and teachers completed questionnaires at this time
- Focus groups of children were carried out in order to discuss course content and progression
- Interviews were conducted with a selection of learners, parents and Headteachers at the end of the project, some of which were recorded in video format
- A celebration event was organised, with support from the Lord Provost for Fife. This event included a parent/pupil/Headteacher evaluation of the project



Impact

On learners and their families

At the end of the project, evaluations suggested that pupils felt more confident and felt that their French had improved. Most children reported they enjoyed learning French at home.

"It was challenging, but in a fun way"

"I do the French course at home with my mum and sister"

"I joined a choir because I enjoyed singing French songs"

"In business you need to communicate with people from other countries. This course is helping my future"

The baseline assessment revealed that most parents knew some basic French vocabulary such as greetings, counting up to 20 and traditional songs. The majority of parents shared that although they were looking forward to learning with their child, they were nervous about their French skills. Over 90% of families created their online account and accessed the course at least once, with around 50% of families fully completing the course.

At the end of the project, parents who completed the course said that their confidence in French had increased. Most of them enjoyed revisiting their language skills and learning alongside their child.

Here are some of the quotes:

"We have enjoyed being part of this French programme. For the first time, we are learning together with the children and it's better. It has been a joint effort"

"French fun for families helped me talk to my kid about homework. It was great to learn together!"

"I enjoyed the glimpses of French culture by looking at the podcasts"

"I plan to use it in the future in my holidays and to use it with my daughter too"

Double click the icon below to view the French for Families in Fife video



**French for Families
in Fife Celebration €**

On practitioners/schools

Baseline assessments highlighted that many teachers lacked confidence in teaching French but felt the online course for families could be a tool to support them in the classroom. Practitioners were interested in the learning at home element of the project.

Headteachers were asked to provide feedback on how the course offered opportunities to develop family learning / learning at home in their establishments.

- *"This project gave clear ideas to parents on how to support their children's learning along with useful resources"*
- *"The booklet is useful to revisit key learning and provide a record of what the family achieved"*
- *"This course responds to the needs of the family – The course can be worked on at a pace that suits all involved"*

- “*This course provides an excellent pathway for children and parents to learn a new language. It’s a good resource for teachers to use in school to support learning*”

Anecdotal evidence suggests that some participants experienced increased engagement from older siblings and enjoyed a deepening of intergenerational family relationships.

Challenges

Levels of participation varied across schools, some schools reporting a larger number of families actively involved than others. This can be partially attributed to the engagement of teaching staff who enthused and encouraged the families to take part.

Careful collaborative planning with classroom teachers would have resulted in more systematic engagement from staff across the schools. Going forward a renewed emphasis on collegiate discussion and decision-making will be encouraged.

Next Steps

The strength of this project lies in how it has opened up the Family Learning agenda in a meaningful and genuine way. Pupils and parents report having enjoyed learning together.

“French fun for Families” is currently used in various schools in Fife and other Local Authorities across Scotland.

In terms of content, due to the popularity of the animations and videos, more will be added to the programme in order to enhance the learning.

Responding to feedback, the pace of learning has been addressed with more opportunity given for consolidation.