

## **Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC): Forth Valley & West Lothian**

<b>Authorities:</b>	<b>Clackmannanshire, Falkirk, Stirling, West Lothian</b>
<b>Case Study Focus:</b>	<b>Parental engagement with languages</b>
<b>Establishments:</b>	<b>Cowie Primary School, Stirling Fishcross Primary School, Clackmannanshire Sauchie ELC, Clackmannanshire St Bernadette's Primary School, Falkirk Westfield Primary School, West Lothian</b>
<b>Learners' stage/s:</b>	<b>The project focuses mostly on learners within P5-7. However, Fishcross Primary and Sauchie ELC, in their own mini cluster, focus on pre-school and P1 learners.</b>

## **Background**

Set up in 2017, the Forth Valley and West Lothian Regional Improvement Collaborative supports the teaching, learning and practice of teachers across the four local authorities which make up the RIC. These are: Clackmannanshire, Falkirk, Stirling and West Lothian. Within the FVWL RIC, there are 173 primary schools, 29 secondary schools and 16 ASN schools, serving approximately 68,000 learners. 60 data zones across the RIC fall within the most deprived in Scotland, according to SIMD 2016. The SIMD 2020 report highlights very little change to this where the data obtained from each of the four local authorities has changed by less than 2 percentage points. Clackmannanshire is a Scottish Attainment Challenge Authority and there are some Scottish Attainment Challenge schools in the other three local authorities.

Across the FVWL Regional Improvement Collaborative, French is the predominant L2 language, however Spanish is taught as an L2 in a few clusters. Each local authority has either a dedicated 1+2 Development Officer or staff member with responsibility for 1+2 across their authority. Since 2020/21, teachers from all four local authorities have the opportunity to engage in the RIC- wide Leadership of Languages programme. This builds on the joint programme that was set up by Falkirk and West Lothian in 2017. The programme is

designed to support practitioners and school language leads with various aspects of language teaching, supporting their professional development. Within the Leadership of Languages programme, parental engagement and family learning is a key component where participants are encouraged to explore opportunities in which parents and families can support their child's language(s) learning.

### About the educational establishments and their learners



**School:** Cowie Primary School

**Authority:** Stirling Council

**Stage of Learners:** P5

Cowie Primary School is non-denominational school located in the Stirlingshire village of Cowie and is situated 4 miles to the south-east of Stirling. The school serves approximately 150 pupils and, according to The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), the majority of Cowie Primary School's pupils live within the most deprived data zones. The school was opened in August 1886 and extended in 1903 and 1911. Having undergone a period of extensive refurbishment in recent years, the school building now features well-equipped and bright classrooms, flexible learning spaces, combined gym hall and dining room, new library and a Cowie Community Room. The school's outdoor space comprises of a large playground with seating areas, a grassy area which has been fenced off and a quiet garden which Citizenship groups have developed.

In recognition of the positive reading culture developed by the school, Cowie Primary School has been successful in the First Minister's Reading Challenge Awards. In 2019, the school scooped the prestigious School Reading Journey Prize and in the same year had their brand new school library opened by Sir Chris Hoy. Following on from the success in 2019, Cowie Primary School was recognised again in 2021 in the First Minister's Reading Challenge Awards and received a 'Highly Commended' by judges in the School and Community Partnership Award. This was in recognition of the ongoing commitment by the school in encouraging reading for pleasure and maintaining a positive reading culture.

Cowie Primary School is within the Bannockburn cluster where, at Bannockburn High School, pupils have the opportunity to study French and Spanish, with blocks of Mandarin in S1/2.



**School:** St Bernadette's Primary School

**Authority:** Falkirk Council

**Stage of Learners:** P6

St Bernadette's Primary School is a denominational primary school located in Stenhousemuir within the Falkirk Council Local Authority. The school provides education at all stages from nursery through to P7, with a current role of 163 pupils in school with an additional 40 pupils in the nursery. The majority of pupils who attend St Bernadette's live within Quintile 8 or above, according to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. St Bernadette's Primary is within the St Mungo's Learning Community where pupils have the opportunity to study French and Spanish at St Mungo's High School.

St Bernadette's Primary enjoys success in a wide range of curricular areas. In 2019, the school was awarded the Digital Schools Award in recognition of the school's promotion of digital skills in the classroom.



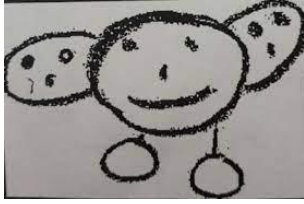
**School:** Fishcross Primary School

**Authority:** Clackmannanshire Council

**Stage of Learners:** P1

Fishcross Primary School is a small non-denominational school located in Fishcross village, Clackmannanshire. The school is situated between the town of Alloa, sitting on the River Forth and the Ochil Hills. Fishcross Primary School opened on 6 September 1875 and the school building was extended and modernised extension in 1991. The school has four classrooms in addition to a well-equipped gym hall and a dining room. It is situated within pleasant surroundings and has a garden designed and sponsored by Scottish Power which offers a wealth of opportunities for environmental education and outdoor learning.

The school serves around 69 pupils and its roll is a mix of catchment children and placing requests. The majority of Fishcross Primary School's pupils live within the most deprived data zones according to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). Fishcross Primary is within the Lornshill Academy cluster where pupils have the opportunity to study French and German.



**School:** Sauchie ELC

**Authority:** Clackmannanshire Council

**Stage of Learners:** Pre-school

Sauchie Early Learning and Childcare Centre is a stand-alone establishment that serves children aged 3-5, with places available for eligible 2 year olds. The Centre is registered to accommodate 103 children at any one time with 15 of the spaces allocated to the 2 year olds. Although Sauchie ELC is located in Sauchie, it welcomes children from across the local authority of Clackmannanshire and offers 3 different models of provision to support the needs of families within the local authority.

Sauchie ELC has recently received a Toward Excellence Award for community and partnership collaboration with their Community and Learning Team and local primary schools: Craighbank Primary, Deerpark Primary, Fishcross Primary. In addition, the Centre was awarded the Diamond Award for their work with improving language skills through the 'Language is Fun Together' initiative, being the first nursery in the Forth Valley to receive this award. The Centre is currently working towards the Bronze Rights Respecting Journey Award.



**School:** Westfield Primary School and Nursery Class

**Authority:** West Lothian Council

**Stage of Learners:** P5-7

Westfield Primary School is a small school situated in the Westfield area of West Lothian welcoming pupils from Nursery through to P7. The school is non-denominational and serves around 42 pupils mostly in composite classes, with 12 children in attendance in the nursery. The majority of pupils attending Westfield Primary live within Quintile 3, according to the Scottish Index of Multiple (SIMD). Westfield Primary School is within the Linlithgow High School cluster where pupils have the opportunity to study French, Spanish and German.

Westfield Primary has recently adopted an agile approach to learning, ensuring the curriculum reflects pupil's voice, pupil interests and passions. To accommodate this, the school has transformed its learning spaces to facilitate creativity, curiosity, exploration, innovation, and enjoyment for all pupils. These spaces allow for pupil collaboration across stages, including working with all staff members on projects they are interested in. This whole-school transformation has been pupil-led where pupils created new floor plans to support this innovative approach and rearranged the school accordingly. This change in approach follows on from a 3 year period of exploring and investigating other ways of 'doing school' in which to support the needs of all learners successfully.

## Implementation

### Planning and Implementation

In building this case study, SCILT worked in collaboration with Save the Children, local authority 1+2 development officers within the Forth Valley West Lothian Regional Improvement Collaborative and staff from Cowie primary, Fishcross primary, St Bernadette's primary, Westfield primary and Sauchie ELC. The aims of this project focused on raising attainment for all through engaging parents with their children's language learning in the primary school, with each school having been specially selected to take part in this RIC-wide project of collaborative practice.



Planning for this project was well underway until the global pandemic and blanket school closures forced a rethink on how it could be implemented, or indeed continued. Up until the first national lockdown, only some of the participating schools had had the opportunity to attend professional learning workshops, delivered in-person by colleagues from Save the Children, with all other bookings cancelled. Collectively, we agreed to continue the project and as such planned for online delivery of all professional learning in advance of the planning element for the parental engagement activity(ies).

Due to continuation of Covid restrictions in schools and parents still unable to attend in-school events, each school planned to carry out their family learning language activities online. Many of the schools, who had previously planned for in-school parental engagement activities, had to either rethink their plans to accommodate an online delivery or plan for something new entirely. This process required much thought and consideration by all schools and required an extension of the agreed timeline. Displaying much determination and creativity, staff from each school successfully planned, implemented and evaluated an activity with a group of learners and their families.

#### **Cowie Primary School (Stirlingshire)**

A small group of parents and learners from Primary 5 at Cowie primary school in Stirlingshire took part in an after school French club which was held over 3 sessions during the summer term. Due to Covid restrictions, parents were unable to attend the French club in person, however the club was able to be held online on Teams. The aims of their project were:

- To enhance learners' knowledge, proficiency and confidence in aspects of the French language.
- To develop positive parental engagement through the medium of a Parent / Child French After School Club.

The French club had a particular theme each week and included a variety of activities for pupils and their families to learn about French language and culture together at home. Although the after school club took place online, resources were shared with participating families beforehand, ensuring everyone was equipped to take part. The themes for each session were as follows:

- Session 1: French Food
- Session 2: Animals
- Session 3: Numbers

During the first session, with French food being the focus, one of the activities included creating a menu. Pupils and families were provided with a blank menu and together had to design a menu using familiar French food-related vocabulary which they already knew or had been learning in the session. To support and enhance the learning experience for all families, the school provided them each with a snack box containing typically French items such as croissants and jam in order for families to enjoy a snack together. This offered the perfect opportunity for each family to experience a 'taste of France', together in their own homes.

The theme of Animals was the focus for the second session with Petit Poulet (Chicken Little) taking centre stage. A variety of engaging and interactive were organised, beginning with watching the story of Petit Poulet on YouTube. A colouring activity and animal noises game followed, allowing children and their families to have fun and learn together through play and games.

The final week focused on Numbers and counting in French, with play and games being used to encourage learning together. Familiar games such as Lotto, Missing Number and Dice Game featured as part of this week's activities. Games and play can enhance the language learning experience for people of all ages, and can involve one or more of the four skills of talking, listening, reading and writing. Games are an effective, fun and engaging way for everyone to learn languages and investigate different cultures together as a family.

### **Fishcross Primary/Sauchie ELC**



As part of their transition project, pupils and families got the opportunity to engage in some Spanish activities such as basic greetings, counting in Spanish through songs and games, using Outdoor Learning as a focal point. Due to Covid restrictions, all transition activities were held online and this had an impact on the type of activities the school and ELC could offer. Sauchie ELC shared links to simple Spanish games, stories and songs with parents using the e-journal which worked effectively. Fishcross Primary also shared links with parents via its digital platform to encourage language learning with its P1 families.





[View the video](#) (recommend using Chrome browser).

## St Bernadette's Primary (Falkirk)

Over a period of 6 weekly sessions, Primary 6 pupils from St Bernadette's were able to participate in an after-school, online series of Spanish family learning activities with their parents and families. The weekly sessions were planned and delivered by the staff from St Bernadette's alongside Falkirk's local authority 1+2 development officer. Throughout each week, the planned sessions provided an opportunity for pupils and their families to learn about Spanish culture in addition to Spanish language. The weekly sessions were interactive in style with plenty online games, quizzes, songs and activities to motivate the learners of all ages. The online sessions were held on Teams which allowed for families to access any supporting materials in the Team in between the sessions.

The Spanish Family Learning project ran as follows:

<p>Week 1</p>	<p><b>Spanish Greetings and Feelings</b></p> <p>Pupils and families learned about the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The benefits of learning a language</li> <li>• Spanish speaking countries across the world – Where's Wally? activities</li> <li>• Cognates – spotting them in Spanish</li> <li>• Basic greetings/introducing oneself</li> <li>• Description of Family Learning Project for parents to share at the Celebration event in Week 6.</li> <li>• A link to a padlet filled with games and activities to consolidate the learning from week 1 was made available to the families.</li> </ul>	
<p>Week 2</p>	<p><b>Los Numeros/Barcelona</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Numbers to 31 – Bingo/Lotto</li> <li>• Simple calculations using numbers</li> <li>• Saying/ asking age</li> <li>• Linguascope activities</li> <li>• Barcelona – landmarks, regional specialities (food), places to visit, regional festivals</li> <li>• Links to virtual monument tour, photos of Barcelona, Drive and Listen to Spanish radio, Quizlet activity</li> </ul>	

<p>Week 3</p>	<p><b>El Calendario</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Days of the week</li> <li>• Months of the year</li> <li>• Asking/saying the date</li> <li>• Asking/saying one’s birthday</li> <li>• Spanish festivals</li> <li>• Linguascope follow-up activities</li> </ul>	
<p>Week 4</p>	<p><b>La Comida y Las Bebidas</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fruit &amp; Vegetables</li> <li>• Seafood &amp; Meat</li> <li>• Drinks</li> <li>• Traditional Spanish foods</li> <li>• Tapas Menu</li> <li>• Like/Don’t like</li> <li>• La Boqueria famous indoor food market, Barcelona</li> </ul>	
<p>Week 5</p>	<p><b>El Mercado</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buying food at the market</li> <li>• Halloween poem/activities</li> <li>• Toad’s Eyes, Frog’s Legs</li> <li>• Esqueletos del Terror song</li> <li>• Linguascope activities</li> </ul>	
<p>Week 6</p>	<p><b>Celebration</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Families share their presentations of their chosen Spanish speaking city</li> </ul>	

### Westfield Primary (West Lothian)

Planning for the parental engagement activity was a collaborative effort between the P5/6/7 class teacher and the school’s French Ambassadors at Westfield Primary. The Ambassadors worked with the teacher to plan the activities which would feature as part of this project. In order to gauge the best dates and times that would suit their families, pupils created an online form for parents to complete in which they could state their preferences. The form also listed a selection of the planned activities that parents could note their interest in taking part in. These activities included cooking, a Kahoot game based on knowledge of France and French language, a sing-along, and a Scavenger Hunt. Based on the



responses stated on the form, the pupils created a timetable of events which was duly uploaded on Teams for the pupils to access and fill in with their parents.

In order to promote the scheduled activities, the Ambassadors created a promotional video which was used to publicise the event and provide further information for parents. This information video was uploaded onto Teams in advance of the MS form going 'live' for parents to complete.

The series of 4 events took place online over two evenings in which 2 activities took place each day. The timetable was as follows:

<b>Tuesday</b>	
Session 1 – 5.30pm – 6.00pm	Cooking a French omelette
Session 2 – 6.00pm – 6.30pm	Kahoot - 'What do you know about France?'
<b>Wednesday</b>	
Session 1 – 6.00pm – 6.30pm	French Sing-along
Session 2 – 6.30pm – 7.00pm	Scavenger Hunt

The Ambassadors chose the recipe and songs, created the Kahoot and Scavenger Hunt and got together all the resources need for each activity showing excellent collaboration and enthusiasm. One ambassador demonstrated the cooking and the response from both parents and pupils was very positive. The sing a long encouraged some expressive dancing and the Kahoot and Scavenger Hunt became quite competitive!

## Impact

### Impact on staff

Overall, staff were happy with the activities they carried out with their families. Although many of the activities had to be scaled back due to Covid restrictions and rising positive cases in school and beyond, staff commented that activities were carefully planned to ensure they were manageable within the restrictions. From the schools that took part in this project, feedback forms were shared with staff, pupils and parents. Many of the participating staff commented similarly on the challenges faced with engaging parents during the unprecedented time of a global pandemic. Despite the considerable difficulties

faced, staff commented on the various success of the parental engagement activity carried out.

### ***Successes***

- Positive feedback from families and children indicating an enjoyment working together on French games /activities.
- Family learning packs which the children took home each helped to generate enthusiasm.
- Interactive aspects of the activities worked well to ensure engagement and enjoyment (avoiding reliance on worksheets / written tasks etc).
- Using a virtual platform which families were already familiar with (Google Classroom) also helped to avoid barriers to participation.
- Video links sent home to parents allowed them to access at a convenient time and could be watched again and again if children and families liked.
- French Ambassadors took charge of the activities and found the French recipe, chose the songs, created the Kahoot and made up the Scavenger Hunt. They then helped deliver each activity on Teams displaying great collaboration and leadership skills.

### ***Challenges***

Most teachers commented on the lack of engagement from parents in virtual activities. One teacher remarked that one of the barriers they faced was finding the best time to suit parents when inviting them to Google Meets, workshops etc. With the low number of parents taking part across all the schools, another teacher mentioned, "I would have liked to engage even more families. It would also have been useful to run a few more sessions as the project was smaller scale than initially planned due to Covid. It would also have benefitted from being face to face rather than virtual, to help build up relationships etc..." This sentiment appears to be echoed by others however teachers recognise the benefits of this intervention and comment on what they would do differently once restrictions are lifted.

- Invite families to come into school and work with us face to face. More linked lessons for families to engage in.
- Target specific families who would benefit (personalised invites from children). Run sessions face to face, when Covid restrictions allow.
- Hopefully carry out the events in person in the school, which our parents prefer. Be more rigorous with promoting the event and if it had to be virtual, find a way to involve the nursery.

Teachers would be keen to pursue these types of language learning activities with their families, particularly once parents are permitted to attend events held in the school. One teacher commented, “I have enjoyed taking part in this project and the children who took part with their parents thoroughly enjoyed it as did their parents. I can really see the benefit of it and the impact it has had on the interest in their children's language learning from the parents who attended.”

### **Impact on parents**

Parents commented favourably on having the opportunity to learn about language and other cultures along with their child. Many view languages as an important part of their child's education and value the benefits that language learning can bring. One parent commented, “I think it is important for my child to learn languages, as it will help with translation and travel in the future.” The variety of activities planned by the schools were enjoyed by the parents and they found the interactive elements fun and engaging. For many, it showcased how languages can be taught in a variety of engaging and interesting contexts in school today. For some, this might differ greatly from their own experience with language learning in school.

### **Impact on pupils**

Across all the participating schools, pupils are mostly learning French and Spanish as part of their language learning entitlement. Although literacy and numeracy are regarded as the most important elements of their education, many pupils see the value of languages and believe they are an important part of the curriculum. Pupils comment on the benefits of language learning, with one pupil stating that it ‘helps us respect the beliefs and cultures of others. There is clearly a view of how languages can broaden horizons amongst the pupils and the positive impact they can have on work and life in general. Overall, they enjoyed engaging in learning activities with their families and would be happy to continue if opportunities arise in the future.

## **Next Steps**

### **Fishcross primary**

Looking forward, Fishcross Primary would hope to offer Family Learning sessions in school for parents as part of transition to allow them to learn alongside their children and take part in different activities, song sessions, food tasting etc together. Due to COVID, we chose to send the video to encourage language learning at home but going forward we would look to bring families into school as part of transition programme to take part face to face.

At other stages of the school a similar approach will be taken with families. They will be invited to learn together during open afternoons and/or after school/early evening events. This will enable families to engage with language learning across our whole school community and we can show the progression and different vocabulary we concentrate on at each stage.

### **Westfield Primary**

At Westfield Primary, the French Ambassadors are keen to replicate some of the activities they did as part of this project now that parents can come back into school. Previously these activities were undertaken online and now the Ambassadors are looking forward with enthusiasm to organising activities such as scavenger hunts so that parents can get involved in person in school.

As part of Westfield's agile way of learning, 'showcase' mornings are also being held. These events allow the children to take parents through their projects, explaining the planning, skills and how they will share their learning. The Ambassadors are going to be working on ideas to bring French and Spanish into this with one idea being a French café which would coincide with coffee mornings. The Ambassadors are currently in the process of exploring other ideas to involve parents with language learning at Westfield.

### **Cowie Primary**

At Cowie Primary, the next steps will be for class teachers across other stages to lead on similar projects – with the benefit of now being able to do this in person, making use of the cooking trollies within the flexible Cowie Room. The school is keen to link this to the 'Family Fun' events with a focus on numeracy skills.

### **St Bernadette's Primary**

St Bernadette's Primary is hoping to offer another Spanish Family Learning event (in person) in due course with the support of one of the parents whose first language is Spanish. She is currently supporting the P5,6 and 7 pupils, delivering immersive Spanish lessons weekly, and the school hopes to build on this through working together to engage the families of P5,6, and 7 pupils in particular, as well as families throughout the school, in the completion of a similar project.