

Introduction

Authority:	North Ayrshire Council
Case Study Focus:	Parental engagement and family learning
Establishments:	Springside Primary School
Learners' stage/s:	Whole school



About the educational establishment and the learners

Springside Primary is a small, rural, open plan school opened in 1979. It is set in the village of Springside which is situated between Irvine and Kilmarnock. It is surrounded by residential housing, a bowling club and open fields. The village is a mixture of local authority and private housing. The accommodation consists of an Early Years Class, five classrooms, a Nurture Room, library/music room and gym hall/dining hall. The current school roll is 100 pupils from Primary 1 to Primary 7 and 25 Early Years pupils.

90% of Springside Primary School's population live within the most deprived data zones according to The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD).

Background

North Ayrshire Council's Senior Manager for both the 1+2 Languages Team and the Family Learning Team (FLT) was approached by a representative from SCILT with a proposal for a French project focusing on parental engagement and family learning.

As a result of this, the 1+2 Development Officer and the Lead Officer for Family Learning met with the SCILT Professional Development Officer (PDO) to explore the possibility of partnership working to promote learning French to families in North Ayrshire schools.

Within North Ayrshire there are currently 49 primary schools, nine secondary schools and four ASN schools. North Ayrshire Council has a Primary Language Learning (PLL) Framework which includes experiences and outcomes for Modern Language learning at first and second level. Each school has a 1+2 Language Coordinator. The authority has a 1+2 Strategy Group comprised of both a Primary and Secondary representative from each cluster. The Strategy Group is led by the 1+2 Development Officer and Senior Education Manager.

Schools are beginning to share French/Spanish/Gaelic/BSL and Makaton with their wider school community.

The FLT works with almost all schools in North Ayrshire and has established effective ways of working with families across the authority on a range of learning opportunities. In the authority, some primary and secondary schools have begun to make inroads into family language learning through a variety of activities independently. Therefore, both partners within North Ayrshire were extremely keen to work together with SCILT to develop this innovative pilot project.

Schools were invited to express an interest in this pilot project and Springside Primary School was chosen as the pilot school for the following reasons:

- Strong pre-existing relationships between the 1 + 2 Development Officer and school staff with an aim to further develop staff confidence in delivering French
- Strong pre-existing relationships between Springside Primary School's Family Learning worker (FLW), families and school staff
- Strong community ethos within the school and surrounding community of Springside with a flexible and supportive Head Teacher
- With 100 pupils and 77 families in the school community, this allowed for a vertical setting where parents could learn alongside all their children at the same time.

Planning and Implementation

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).

With this in mind, all partners were determined that this project would encourage families to take an interest in their child's learning of French whilst offering support and guidance to school staff in the delivery of future French learning opportunities.

The Development of 'Wee Famille'

As a result of the initial planning stage, the name for this pilot project developed from 'Oui Famille' to the colloquial 'Wee Famille' as a play on words to reflect, not only the relatively small size of the school but also the Scottish-French alliance.

Following this initial planning stage, 'Wee Famille' developed as follows:

- Partners met regularly over a period of four months to fully discuss implementation and develop programme content, with SCILT and North Ayrshire's 1+2 Team working to identify language learning opportunities, as well as exciting and engaging ways to deliver the language, and the Family Learning Team advising on the best way to work with and engage families in the project
- Local businesses were approached to help with the provision of weekly resources, prizes and catering items
- Partners met regularly with school staff to discuss plans. This happened weekly, after every family learning session. Feedback from parents was gathered at the end of each session, to allow the team to be responsive
- The seven week programme ran on Wednesdays from 13:45 – 15:00 with a focus on learning French vocabulary through a variety of games and activities each week
- The 'Wee Famille' Passport was developed to reflect weekly learning themes and support for follow-up home learning activities
- The Head Teacher created four vertical learning groups, ensuring that siblings and relations within the same family were appointed to the same group each week
- Weekly resources and session plans were designed collaboratively by the 1+ 2 Team and SCILT. Materials were printed and prepared by the FLT
- Parents were invited to a coffee afternoon (Focus Group) 2 weeks prior to the programme beginning (conducted by SCILT and the FLT) to investigate attitudes towards learning languages in the primary school.



During the Focus Group, parents expressed the following opinions, feelings and attitudes:

- *We expect everyone to speak English. Languages can take kids so far if they have languages.*
- *I think it's good that they're learning French in school. They absorb things much more easily when they're younger. We've got relatives in Belgium who can switch between languages.*
- *I'm interested in learning because my older son's at high school*
- *I don't see the point in learning languages, but I don't mind learning some if it helps my wee girl.*

Implementation

Prior to the programme starting, 'Wee Famille' was introduced to the school using a logo design competition. This winning logo was included on the 'Wee Famille' passport.



Every Wednesday afternoon for seven weeks, families were invited to learn French together with their child in school. The format each week was generally as follows:

1300	Partners set up for weekly session	
	Children	Parents and families
1345	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching staff and partners planned and delivered weekly sessions with children across the four vertical groups in four separate classrooms Children prepared to share their learning with their families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FLW welcomed parents for registration and refreshments in hall and issued weekly raffle tickets FLW advised parents on the content of that week's session, encouraging them to try out the games, activities and introduce and re-inforce vocabulary to help build confidence before parents joined their children in class
1415	Families came together in class for family learning time	
1455	Children returned to their own classes to prepare for home time	Parents returned to the hall for weekly prize draw and evaluation with FLW
1500	Partners tidied up, debriefed and prepared for the following week's session	

SPS 1 + 2 **'Wee Famille'** **SCILT** Scotland's National Centre for Languages **Family Learning Team**

A 'Families learning French together' Programme at Springside Primary School

Wee Famille will be run in partnership with pupils and families at Springside, North Ayrshire's 1+2 and Family Learning Teams and SCILT (National Centre for Languages based at Strathclyde University).
Quelle chance! A great opportunity for all!

When?
Wednesdays
 25 October
 01 November
 08 November
 15 November
 22 November
 29 November
 06 December

Oh là là!

FREE PRIZE DRAW - French Hamper!

FREE GAMES to take home!

WEEKLY PRIZES!

Programme.

1:45pm - 2:15pm Team, staff and pupils work together in class.

1:45pm - 2:15pm Pupils' families are invited for refreshments and a blether with Amanda.

2:15pm - 3:00pm Family Learning Time - fun activities in French and English. Relaxed, informal and easy to practise at home!

DELICIOUS FOOD!

The content of the 'Wee Famille' Passport became an excellent tool to support learning at home, particularly for those parents who were unable to attend every session.

In addition, social media was used to spread the word and share resources, ensuring that all families were included.

The project culminated in a French celebration of learning, which included dancing, food tasting, Matisse inspired mural making, a 'Wee Famille' Quiz, face painting and a photo booth, with the final prize draw resulting in one family winning a special French themed hamper.

Impact

The impact of Wee Famille can be considered in the following areas:

On parents

Parents were asked to provide weekly impact statements in the form of post-it note evaluations and a small sample of parents were invited to provide more formal feedback during a follow-up Focus Group with FLW and SCILT's PDO two weeks after the programme ended. The same questions posed in the Focus Group were then extended to the entire parent forum in the form of an online questionnaire (see Appendix A). A summary of key parental impact statements can be found below:

- *'I just wanted to be part of it and learn a bit with my wee boy. It was good fun. I can't remember anything from school, feel like I'm re-learning things now.'*
- *'I've learned more from coming with my wee girl than what I learned at school. I loved the games. It's good for weans to see you in school too.'*
- *'It was great to spend time learning with my children!'*
- *'It has furthered my life as I'm going to do a Spanish course now! I'm going to do Spanish at night school because I never thought I'd be able to learn it but I was good at it. It was fun and I want to learn a bit of Spanish now before we go to Benidorm.'*

Overall, the impact on parents can perhaps be summarised as:

- Increased confidence in ability to learn French and help their children with French learning
- Increased parental engagement and participation in Family Learning opportunities at Springside (with an average of 40% attendance each week and a large group attending follow-up activities such as a parent-led walking group)



On pupils

Although no formal measure of the impact on pupils was carried out (highlighting an area for future investigation), pupils and their teachers informally reported that:

- Pupils and families engaged effectively across the programme
- Confidence in spoken French across the school improved
- There was a renewed enthusiasm for learning French which was evident in the enjoyment and engagement in the activities
- Overall the quality of the interaction between parents, staff and pupils improved which will have a positive impact on future parental engagement activities.

On school staff

Staff were asked to complete a pre and post questionnaire to help evaluate the impact of 'Wee Famille' on their professional development and confidence in delivering French and Family Learning activities (see Appendix B). More informally, staff reported that:

- All staff took part in the project and felt that their confidence in teaching basic French had increased

- Staff observed the activities and were able to see how they could be developed and extended in teaching French across the school
- Staff enjoyed getting to know pupils and parents from other classes and were able to build relationships across the school whilst collectively learning French

External links

Community groups and authors were keen to be involved in the 'Wee Famille' project and Springside's local library set up a French book corner for families in the area to use.

A French diplomat from the Institut Français, Écosse was keen to observe the family engagement aspect and explore the sustainability of the programme.

Development Officers and Inspectors from schools in Lyon and Saint Étienne collaborated with staff after participating in a 'Wee Famille' afternoon. They were especially interested and impressed by the parents' evaluations (left on post-its at the end of the session). A teacher at Springside has already been in touch with the staff in France to arrange future links with a school in Lyon.

Further links were made with local and national businesses, who provided weekly donations of goods and vouchers. This contributed greatly to the success of the project.



Next Steps

For Springside Primary School:

- To continue the teaching of French in a fun and informative way
- To continue to engage parents in learning
- To continue to teach some of the customs and culture of France through our languages programme

- To use and develop the activities in the teaching of Spanish across the school as an L3 experience

For the 1+2 Languages Team:

- To seek opportunities to publicise the 'Wee Famille' initiative across Scotland. The 1+2 Team and Family Learning Team presented at the annual National Parent Forum of Scotland conference
- A master pack of the project resources has been produced to promote 'Wee Famille' both locally and nationally
- An equivalent project pack in Spanish has also been produced and is now available locally and nationally
- To involve other schools in 'Wee Famille' or 'Arriba Familia' across North Ayrshire. Currently ten schools are running the 'Wee Famille' or 'Arriba Familia' (one school is doing both). Some are using the project as a kick-start for L3 French or Spanish. The majority of schools are embracing the language projects independently of the 1+2 Team, supported by their FLW. Some schools have adapted the format to suit. The initiative is proving sustainable
- To build on existing project partnerships, and look for opportunities to develop new ones (collaborating across authorities). The partnership between the 1+2 Team and the FLT has gone from strength to strength with projects such as 'Family Fusion' which will integrate family life and other mother tongue languages, eg Polish, Arabic, Persian are being planned
- The 1+2 Team are members of SCILT's Parental Engagement Working Group
- Family Learning workers are helping lead 'Wee Famille' or 'Arriba Familia' initiatives across the authority
- Local venues are training staff in Makaton in order to achieve 'Makaton Friendly' status, eg Eglinton Park, local libraries, HAC (Harbour Arts Centre)