

Early French Programme in East Renfrewshire Council

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In East Renfrewshire, children learn French from their pre-school year and throughout primary school.

The roll-up/roll-down began in Session 2002-03, when some schools started to teach the first topics to pupils in P4 or P5 instead of waiting until P6, as in the original MLPS model. This was dependent on the number of teachers trained in a school and was achieved more quickly in smaller schools as larger schools had to wait until they had sufficient number of teachers trained to deliver the programme.

At the same time, children who were in their pre-school year in session 2002-03 started the Infant French programme. By August 2005, the process was complete.

In the early stages, children learn the foreign language in the same way as they learn their mother tongue, through songs, rhymes & games. These young children prove to be Successful Learners as they have no inhibitions and do not suffer the lack of confidence often apparent at the age a foreign language is traditionally introduced in Scotland. Their speech organs are still developing and so they find it easier to imitate the sounds of the foreign language. They are enthusiastic about being able to communicate in a foreign language and this in turn boosts their self-confidence. Listening and Speaking skills are developed initially, with early Reading and Writing activities being introduced towards the end of P2, based on familiar language. Pupils experience success when reading words they already know how to pronounce. Pupils play picture/word matching games and are encouraged to make links with English, to highlight the similarities and differences between the two languages. Each pupil has an attractive workbook containing reading and writing activities.

From Pre-5 – P3, a core resource produced by La Jolie Ronde is used, to provide the non-specialist infant teacher with materials, including CDs with native speakers to introduce new language and a range of songs & rhymes. In addition, teachers are encouraged to use French as much as possible in classroom management and across the curriculum when appropriate. This has the benefit of reinforcing early learning of colours and numbers. Using fairly simple French allows teachers and pupils to, for example, call the register, take lunch choices, greet and dismiss the class. Fruit can be chosen and distributed in French at snack-time and pupils can be asked to hand out/gather in resources

around the room. Pupils appear to listen more carefully to instructions given in the foreign language.

In the Pre-5 sector, details of skills and topics to be covered are available to teachers on the authority's Intranet system. Teachers are encouraged to introduce certain topics in the order that suits other on-going projects within the establishment. A simple Transfer of Information form will be piloted at the end of this session to ensure relevant information on work covered is passed on to the P1 teacher to ensure a smooth transition. In P1-P3, detailed lesson planners, linked to the current 5-14 strands in all 4 Attainment Outcomes at Levels A & B have been developed, and have been made available to staff on the Intranet to ensure continuity and progression throughout the infant stages. Planners offer suggested activities, show pupil progress and include consolidation and extension activities for each Unit of work. Interactive Whiteboard activities to complement the La Jolie Ronde courses are also available on the Intranet, as are all Reading materials to support teachers introducing the written word to pupils.

The early start means that the topics previously used to introduce French in the middle or upper stages are being revised to take infant learning into account. Teachers have commented this session on how much the current P4 pupils (the first year-group who started French in pre-school) can achieve and their level of confidence is greater than in previous years.

Topics are added to the Intranet as they are revised, to ensure teachers have access to the new materials. Co-ordinators from all schools meet towards the end of each session, when the revised materials are launched.

It will be Session 2010-11 before the first year group who started to learn French in their pre-school year transfer to secondary school. All primary and secondary schools are resources with Métro 1 materials and clusters decide which units are covered in Primary 1 and in S1. This will be adjusted as the early start moves through school. Regular cluster meetings involving colleagues from the primary and secondary schools will continue to take place to decide which work is most suited to be added to the upper primary French curriculum. Primary teachers will continue to be supported with CPD sessions, which will allow them to deliver the new programmes of work in the upper primary.

French co-ordinators within clusters meet regularly with a member of the secondary Modern languages department to ensure that the same skills are covered across cluster primaries in the middle and upper stages. This has been, and will continue to be, of particular importance over the next few years, because with the roll-down-roll-up model pupils currently in P5-7 have not benefited from the infant French programme. This session, P4 pupils are in their fifth year of French, while P5 pupils are in their second.

These cluster meetings also allow planning to take place to ensure a smooth transition from primary to secondary. Secondary colleagues visit their feeder primaries to assist with assessment of Speaking and Writing skills towards the end of P7 and a Transfer of Information form is passed between the sectors with information on progress within all 4 skills for each pupil. In-service days have been used to allow secondary specialists to offer support in assessing these skills to their primary colleagues. Other developments include an Induction morning where all primary pupils visit the associated secondary where they are introduced to the link topic and practise new skills in the ICT suite, an email 'Buddy' scheme between P7 and S1 pupils and senior language students visiting primaries and participating in lessons.

Training is an important factor and is offered to teachers in a variety of ways. For teachers who have previously studied French to Higher, a 15-day training course covers the language & methodology required to deliver from Pre-5 – P7. For infant teachers who have not studied French in depth, a twilight CPD course running each month throughout the school year supports teachers from Pre-5 – P3 and allows the programme to be delivered at these stages. Modelling lessons in the class of the teacher undergoing training proves to be a successful way to demonstrate the necessary teaching skills required.

French foreign language assistants support language learning for pupils and teachers and visit all 3 sectors weekly. As well as providing native speaker support, they allow pupils to experience aspects of another country and culture. Assistants run lunchtime and after-school clubs to allow pupils to take part in, for example, French Arts & crafts and Drama. An Eco-club runs in one school and pupils have made posters in French to display, which effectively contribute to the school's aim to support re-cycling. Assistants are participating in the authority's Story-telling Festival, sharing stories and culture in schools and public libraries. They have also worked with classes to participate in national events organised through the *Institut Français*, with pupils as young as P2 submitting entries to the *Lire en Fête* event and taking part in *Rencontres Théâtrales*. Confident Individuals and Effective Contributors indeed!

Within the secondary sector, diversification in other languages is encouraged and taster classes are offered to S2 classes, often by the foreign language assistants during senior students' exam leave.

In recent years in East Renfrewshire, in common with other Scottish authorities, there has been an increase in the interest in Spanish and a decline in German. Italian is offered in 2 of our secondaries.

This session has shown a significantly increased number of S6 students in Modern Languages departments studying a crash course in Spanish at Intermediate 1, 2 and Higher levels. These include students who already have a Higher in another language and wish to diversify, and

also students who had decided not to continue with a language into S5. Additionally, pupils in 5 out of our 7 secondary schools are learning Spanish during the current session, whereas in 2001 Spanish was only offered in two of our schools.

We have also hosted a Chinese Language Assistant this session, providing an innovative approach to language learning. Pupils and staff have shown interest in learning basic Mandarin at lunchtime and in after-school clubs. The assistant currently visits a primary school one afternoon a week, teaching Mandarin to P6&7 pupils over lunchtime then working in the infant department teaching pupils the Mandarin words for the objects they ask her to make using Chinese paper-cutting skills.