SUPPORT FOR GOVERNORS

Good Practice in the Planning and Delivery of Modern Languages

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LANGUAGES
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GOOD PRACTICE: CURRICULUM PLANNING OF LANGUAGES

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this document is to provide governors with a resource that contains information and examples of good practice. It includes examples from Welsh schools in relation to the vision, planning, support and delivery of modern languages and shows how schools successfully promote and deliver an inspiring experience for pupils. The guide is intended to be used in conjunction with other support materials that are provided in the governors' pack and to aid discussion.

Examples of how this looks to teachers is given in the testimonies shown in each section.

We would like to thank the following for their willingness to contribute to this guide and to congratulate them on the excellent developments in their schools:
 1.   Alun School
 2.   Lewis Girls' Comprehensive School
 3.   Monmouth Comprehensive School
 4.   Ysgol Gyfun Porthcawl Comprehensive School
 5.   Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Plasmawr
 6.   ERW

PROACTIVE SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE BY GOVERNORS

The following characteristics of good practice are evident:

1. Strong support for languages from the school's senior leadership team and governors is clear and this is pivotal to success.

2. The Governing Body has a clear vision for the school in terms of language provision which is based on:
a. evidence obtained from school data
b. pupil voice
c. the future needs of the community
d. liaison with departmental staff

3. A sharp focus on whole-school policy and curriculum planning, and a strong ethos for language learning across the school is set by the Governing Body and can be seen in the school development plan.

4. Curriculum decisions respond to pupil needs and the needs of the wider community, they are not purely financial.

5. Robust questioning takes place on a regular basis to senior managers and leaders on the uptake of languages in the school, strengthening school accountability.

6. A proactive and supportive link governor who understands the needs of the pupils is a key link between the language department and the governors.

7. Strong support for languages is reflected in well-resourced departments including the innovative use of ICT in teaching, learning and motivation of pupils.

8. An ongoing conversation for the whole school and beyond regularly takes place.

"Governors are very supportive about the promotion of languages. They will attend and support projects/ events. This includes inviting governors with any language links to meet with students for conversation (e.g. ex-teacher). A link governor supports review meetings twice a year with the head teacher. "

"Luckily, due to the support of Cardiff University and some very supportive governors we were able to keep our AS class, although we had to concede on the number of lessons, we would be allocated."

"We have a link MFL governor. We meet to discuss performance, uptake and general issues. They then represent us positively in meetings to promote languages. I have a very good professional relationship with our governor established over many years."

AN EFFECTIVE APPROACH BY THE SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

The following characteristics of good practice are evident:

1. The headteacher and senior leaders have a clearly planned progression for language teaching and learning in the school development plan.

2. The headteacher and senior leaders actively support and enhance the status of modern languages and ensure it is visible on the key stage 4 timetable.

3. The headteacher and senior leaders try to ensure that pupils have the opportunity to learn at least one modern language to examination level during their time at school.

4. Languages are promoted by the senior leadership team to parents and to pupils – the subject is seen as a key part of the key stage 4 curriculum and hence this will encourage more learners to opt for the subject.

5. Partnerships with primary feeder schools to develop languages strengthen the learning of languages and provide additional transition activities for pupils.

"The senior leadership is very supportive and recent line management has improved the direction and outcomes of the department substantially."

"In order to promote languages and to support the few students who wished to continue post-16, the school has more recently allowed classes of very small numbers to continue. This has led to a five-fold increase in the numbers of students taking up a language in Year 12."

"Our leadership is always open to discussion relating to the international language provision in our school. Discussions about option columns and the take-up of languages, particularly at GCSE, happen regularly and involve the department, the pastoral team and senior leadership."

"Very supportive SLT [Senior Leadership Team] who recognise the efforts of the department and the national decline in languages. Accommodating of requests to try new option columns. We use 'Team Teach' for speaking lessons at KS4/5 and the senior managers are supportive of our LP [Lead Practitioner] status."

"We are lucky to have an extremely supportive SMT [Senior Management Team]. Our A level numbers can sometimes be low and yet we still have the contact time on the timetable. The second MFL has continued to be offered in year 9. In meetings with parents (e.g. KS4 Options) and assemblies, languages are promoted as an intrinsic part of students' education."

"SLT very passionate about offering a broad curriculum hence the offer of three languages. We have sometimes had to reduce time at A level if we have less than three students, however that has been understandable as SLT are under financial pressures. No reduction in offer of languages and even if little uptake at GCSE, never."

GOOD PRACTICE IN RELATION TO CURRICULUM PLANNING

The following characteristics of good practice are evident:

1. A major feature of good practice is where there is a range of languages offered to and studied by pupils, thus generating a high-take up in key stage 4 and post-16.

2. High take-up of languages is a result of school curriculum planning which is flexible and takes account of the needs of pupils e.g.:

• Free option choice – learner fed preference as opposed to rigid option columns.
• And/or option blocks with languages appearing in multiple columns allowing for maximum take up of languages.
• Finding creative ways of organising the timetable with small groups of pupils.
• Working in partnership with other schools to allow languages to prosper.
• Offering alternative language qualifications to compliment pupils' studies and to ensure they continue studying a language.

3. Senior leaders provide small groups of pupils with the opportunity to continue with a modern language in key stage 4, by becoming more creative in the way that they organise the timetable.

4. The imaginative exploitation of ICT is evident including the opportunities pupils have to be creative with languages: e.g. daily conversation with exchange school in Europe.

5. The time allocated to classes at key stage 4 is in line with that for other non-core subjects.

6. Headteachers allow very small groups of pupils to proceed in key stage 4 with challenging targets for the department and its learners so that:

GOOD PRACTICE IN RELATION TO CURRICULUM PLANNING

- Provision meets the pupils' wishes.
- The subject(s) is visible on the key stage four timetable, is seen as part of the key stage 4 curriculum and will encourage more pupils to take the subject.
- It has the benefit of building up the status of modern languages.

"GCSE – Opportunities to complete QCF Qualifications – vocational qualifications in other language not studied at GCSE – Italian (French, German, Spanish also offered)."

"We offer three languages at GCSE, AS and A Level – French, German and Spanish. In December Year 9 are asked to submit free choice options and choose three subjects with an additional fourth they would consider. From this the Assistant Head attempts to meet all the choices by fitting their choices to the option columns. Sometimes this is not always successful however it meets the needs usually of over 95% of students. From this there is then a discussion to explain why the languages have been placed in option columns before they are distributed in February, still considering these are not final options. We also try to place languages in the three separate columns to enable dual linguists to opt for more than one language, however again this will depend on interest. Once students have made options in February, again further discussions then take place regarding to best accommodate student choice. In the past subjects have been swapped to support student choices."

"Our KS4 option blocks are fluid and there are changes to the columns each year. We have noticed big differences to numbers depending on the spread of subjects in a column and these 'clashes' vary from year to year. We now have a column with both French and German, which allows MAT [More Able and Talented] pupils to split the two languages at GCSE. Languages do not draw large numbers when places against Triple Science, but this trend is across all subjects."

School 1

"There are three option blocks. French and German are offered in two – 1 and 3. Usually, the majority of students opt for MFL in option 1. "

OPTION BLOCK 1	OPTION BLOCK 2	OPTION BLOCK 3
Art & Design	Computer Science	Art & Design
French	Food & Nutrition	Business
German	History	French
History	ICT	Geography
Media Studies	Performing Arts (BTEC)	German
Construction	Photography	Health & Social Care
Engineering	Physical Education	Media (BTEC)
Product Design	Religious Studies	Music

School 2

"These are our current option blocks for GCSE – they have remained more or less the same for the past few years. Some subjects which are shared (e.g. Spanish) need to remain in the same column for GCSE and A-level so that they can be timetabled across the three partner schools."

OPTION BLOCK 1	OPTION BLOCK 2	OPTION BLOCK 3
Geography	Geography	PE
Spanish	Drama	Catering
Art & Design 3D	Graphics	Art and Design
Music Technology	Public Services	Sport and Leisure
Music	History	Sociology
Religious Education	Open Air (BTEC Vocational)	History
Product Design	Health and Social Care	French
Computing	IT	
Open air (BTEC Vocational)	Religious Education	

TRENDS IN LANGUAGES OVER LAST 4 YEARS

Schools that have actively engaged in promoting and supporting modern languages show very good numbers of pupils continuing to take GCSE, AS and A levels despite the difficulties faced by these subjects. Active promotion, support and excellent teaching of languages can also be seen to increase the number of pupils opting and taking a language, again despite these difficulties.

GCSE

School 1

"In 2020-2021 we have 60 pupils in each option so 120 pupils in total studying French/German – this will equate to almost exactly 50% of the cohort; this has never been achieved previously."

"There has been a decline in numbers over recent years and so a new curriculum was introduced, trips abroad, language ambassadors, whole school language events and KS4 results were discussed with KS3 pupils as we always have good results. The numbers taking languages have increased as a consequence."

"The uptake in languages at KS4 has always been a challenge. We have focussed on promoting the profile of MFL at KS3 and this has made a great difference to uptake for GCSE in September 2020."

School 2

GCSE									
2015		2016		2017		2018		2019	
French	39	French	44	French	29	French	34	French	29
German	20	German	14	German	12	German		German	15
Spanish	20	Spanish	22	Spanish	20	Spanish	14	Spanish	18
TOTAL	79	TOTAL	80	TOTAL	61	TOTAL	48	TOTAL	62

AS/ A Level

School 3

Numbers taking the subject	2016	2017	2018	2019
AL	12	8	10	10
AS	10	15	18	21

Numbers taking the subject	2016	2017	2018	2019
AL Total (Fr) (Ger)	8 (2) (6)	8 (5) (3)	11 (7) (4)	7 (3) (4)
AS Total (Fr) (Ger)	19 (13) (6)	14 (9) (5)	19 (12) (7)	14 (9) (5)
GCSE Total (Fr) (Ger)	68 (40) (28)	70 (40) (30)	62 (36) (26)	79 42) (37)

EMPLOYING LANGUAGE TEACHERS WITH THE PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TO SUPPORT LEARNING

The following characteristics of good practice and success are evident:

1. Schools with highly qualified staff (in one or two modern languages), who continually upskill and are proactive in the promotion and the teaching of languages is a major feature.

2. Regular and effective internal professional development such as masterclasses disseminated by members of the language department is a key feature. Effective professional development for teachers is a core part of securing effective teaching.

3. Professional development and training are undertaken with specialist external organisations providing expert linguists and educators.

4. Pro-active use of online training opportunities and webinars are encouraged and monitored as part of staff professional development.

5. Attendance at WJEC training events and becoming external examiners for examination boards is evident.

6. Involvement in external working parties and projects including digital learning, is encouraged by senior management to extend staff competences and creativity - such as ELAPSE* [Embedding Languages Across Primary and Secondary Education].

7. Use of local training opportunities such as Teach Meets delivered by regional education consortia are attended and shape curriculum design.

*Embedding Languages Across Primary and Secondary Education: https://lfee.net/category/erasmus-plus-elapse/

"We have five language teachers in our team. Four/ five have more than one language they can offer however they support and are eager to develop new skills. Two of the team have also taught Welsh to strengthen collaboration.

Most staff development is within the team and our school PLCs [Professional Learning Communities]. However, the team currently are very involved in many working parties, including digital learning, Literacy, questioning, challenge, developing resilience etc. The team have a group membership to ALL [The Association for Language Learning] and have volunteered for ELAPSE [Embedding Languages Across Primary and Secondary Education] project, with our primary colleagues.

Staff are given the opportunity to attend WJEC courses and also as part of the EAS [Education Achievement Service (SE Wales)] have opportunities to attend Teach Meets.

We are also a LNS [Learning Network Schools] for the EAS so we are also involved in new initiatives, trials and will help support / organise events for primary /secondary colleagues.

One of the team is a WJEC examiner and the team are encouraged to apply when appropriate, to support understanding of assessment."

"We have five MFL teachers (with two of these on a part time contract), three staff teach German and all can teach French to Year 9. Lead Practitioner role has allowed us CPD [Continuing Professional Development] opportunities with staff masterclasses from one of our German teachers and from one of our French teachers as well as annual attendance at WJEC training. We have three staff who are also examiners for WJEC and this gives us insight into the examining of GCSE French and German Writing and AS French Speaking."

"We are a GwE [North Wales Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service] lead school for languages so we run Hwb meetings to share good practice; guest speakers etc. There are also many webinars and online training options available since lockdown which I have recommended to my team."

MODERN LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT

The following characteristics of good practice are evident:

1. The pedagogic and linguist ability of staff teaching pupils is exceptional. They have pedagogic excellence and coaching and mentoring skills of a high order.

2. Staff are highly motivated, proactive and enthusiastic and they have an extremely professional approach to their work. They give extra time and energy to their pupils.

3. Staff are engaged in effective, sustained and relevant professional development and it is often led by the language staff themselves. Staff are firmly invested in honing and developing their skills.

4. Staff have worked hard to create an innovative curriculum that truly meets the needs of pupils.

5. The promotion of languages throughout all key stages is actively undertaken by all staff teaching languages.

6. Digital technology has been developed appropriately and creatively by the department and the more frequent and effective use of technology has strengthened teachers' subject knowledge, language up-skilling; and has provided high quality resources for language lessons.

7. Heads of departments undertake a wide range of outreach activity in the local area, working with feeder primary schools and other secondary schools. These links enable the faculty to have an up-to-date understanding of best practice in languages teaching and learning.

8. Pupils are strongly encouraged to attend enrichments or study sessions after school in order to deepen their understanding of the language.

9. Enrichment and guidance for native speakers of other languages who wish to take formal examinations in their native tongue is provided.

"MFL team hugely invested and gave up time to support initiatives and their attitudes make a huge difference, as they are role models for students."

"As students lack confidence, this is overcome by the excellence in teaching and knowing students well. This includes trialling new methodology and making sure students can access and succeed."

"We have rewritten our 'Schemes of Work' and developed resources as a team. We have also focussed on engaging content rather than studying a topic just because it appeared in a textbook. We have developed retrieval activities. We have also celebrated the success of our KS4/5 students with the younger pupils showing what you can achieve through studying a language."

"Self-taught language CD roms and websites available for students to make use of in their own time, at school, including online class-to-class interaction with schools abroad, daily conversation with exchange school in Europe."

"For the New Curriculum we are currently designing a parallel subject LLC [Literacy, Languages and Communication] collaborating with English and Welsh to focus on mastery of English, seeing connections and multilingualism."

"The main reason for their success in my opinion is their approach to language learning. They have been the ERW lead school for Multilingual Literacy since 2015, which has dramatically increased learners' confidence and resilience when learning new languages. This is an approach which has been introduced to the Languages, Literacy and Communication Area of Learning and Experience of the new curriculum giving learners consistent strategies and messages about how languages work, thereby enabling them to progress faster. It is also a very positive step that all the primary schools in the cluster have introduced French using the same approach - adding a third language to an already bilingual context."

"Promotion is seen as something we do in lessons every lesson rather than just in a targeted 'focus fortnight'. We focus on celebrating cultural events, music, film, literature as well as the language itself. Formal promotion takes place when option columns are given to pupils, and we ask AS/A2 students to come in and talk to Year 9/11 about their experience of studying languages."

"We promote languages every day in the classroom e.g. year 7 homework – research German business e.g. Adidas, Haribo and we then link these to our lives and highlight how opportunities are greater with a language. In year 8, we promote uptake of a second language and in year 9 we focus on the importance of opting for MFL GCSE. We celebrate languages day etc too."

PROVIDING EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS TO ENHANCE LEARNING

The following characteristics of good practice are evident:

1. The school and the Modern Languages department recognise the impact that working with external organisations has on language provision in schools – the staff are proactive in taking advantage of every opportunity.

2. There is often a strong emphasis on cultural understanding, to a large extent through regular visits abroad and an extensive range of enrichment activities.

3. Strong business links and partnerships have been forged to promote languages and also to provide work experience opportunities.

- "KS3 – after school languages club led by PLAs [Routes Cymru Pupil Language Ambassadors] – offer all languages to support multilingualism and also celebrate home languages.

- Opportunities for year 8 to become PLAs, who then lead a strategy and support events, organise a language a month focus – competition and also issue PowerPoints to forms with language specific information/ phrases.

- GCSE – Opportunities to complete QCF – vocational qualifications in other language not studied at GCSE – Italian (French, German, Spanish also offered)
- Pen pal letters with France / Germany.

- AS/ AL – opportunities to work with Primary to run French Club / German Club Language prefects appointed to support events, welcome visitors.

- Many links shared with external organisations e.g Stephen Spender Prize for poetry in translation / Juvenes Translatores / UK German Connection/ Goethe Institut.

- Students have had the opportunity for work experience abroad at GCSE and A level.

- Students have also taken advantage of courses offered by the UK German Connection and spent time in Berlin, Hamburg and London."

- "KS3 Year 7 MFL club. Visit to Germany / France – we usually take 150 pupils on these popular visits. There is always a waiting list. Year 9 Primary liaison activities.

- GCSE Visit to Berlin – a language school – that the school has participated in an exchange for over 30 years; numbers recently declined so we set up a Berlin visit which has proved very popular. French teachers are hoping to plan a similar visit to Nice.

- We also host extra revision sessions and support from January onwards after school."

"Perception of languages by students and parents – Promotion and authentic approaches with external visitors and ex-students. Excellent link with Cardiff Mentoring Projects. German Assistant also for a year organised through German university direct. Outside speakers to promote to Year 8 and 9. Ex- student links and also primary engagement is so key."

- "KS3: Workshops/masterclasses in Cardiff City Stadium, Cardiff University, Paris trip, Languages Club, Languages Bake Off, EDoL Transition for Year 6 (KS2).

- GCSE: Lille Trip, Languages Club, Languages Bake Off.

- AS/ A Level : Lille Trip, workshops/speakers / masterclasses (Swansea University, Caerleon Comp, Porthcawl Comp) As part of our Lead Practitioner role we have hosted a number of workshops for students in both French and German.

"Languages days or weeks, visits from native speakers and clubs for students to try out other languages are important activities to promote languages."

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