

Modern Foreign Languages

Key Concepts

The teaching of languages is built on the three key building blocks of phonics, vocabulary and grammar. Pupils should be explicitly taught the phoneme-grapheme correspondence in the new languages to ensure accurate pronunciation and in order for them to be able to decode unfamiliar texts with a high degree of accuracy. The vocabulary taught at primary level should come from the high frequency vocabulary found in the target language as well as key words such as colours and numbers. Children should be exposed to simple grammatical concepts in the target language such as masculine and feminine and nouns as well as noun and adjective order and agreement.

Language teaching consists of four skill areas: speaking, listening, reading and writing. Pupils should be given opportunities to build their confidence in all four areas through a range of activities. Pupils are expected to write in the target language, even in Year 3 and their writing will become increasingly complex over the four years of KS2 language study.

National Curriculum Purpose of Study and Aims:

Purpose of study:

Learning a foreign language is a liberation from insularity and provides an opening to other cultures. A high-quality languages education should foster pupils' curiosity and deepen their understanding of the world. The teaching should enable pupils to express their ideas and thoughts in another language and to understand and respond to its speakers, both in speech and in writing. It should also provide opportunities for them to communicate for practical purposes, learn new ways of thinking and read great literature in the original language. Language teaching should provide the foundation for learning further languages, equipping pupils to study and work in other countries.

Aims:

The national curriculum for languages aims to ensure that all pupils:

- understand and respond to spoken and written language from a variety of authentic sources
- speak with increasing confidence, fluency and spontaneity, finding ways of communicating what they want to say, including through discussion and asking questions, and continually improving the accuracy of their pronunciation and intonation
- can write at varying length, for different purposes and audiences, using the variety of grammatical structures that they have learnt
- discover and develop an appreciation of a range of writing in the language studied.

Specific pedagogical considerations:

As pupils may not continue to study the same foreign language once they move to Key Stage 3, it is important that primary practitioners enable learners to build their skills as language learners and not just learners of a particular language. This means that pupils need to learn to use their knowledge of English, or other languages, to identify cognates and near-cognates (words that look the same or similar in two different languages) and use this skill to find meaning in unfamiliar words and phrases. Pupils should also be confident to use a bilingual dictionary to find the meaning of words or generate vocabulary to use in their own work,

It is also important that pupils understand the global nature of the language that they are being taught. Pupils should, for example, appreciate that French is spoken in many other parts of the world other than mainland France and be aware of the reasons for this. The cultures and traditions of the French, Spanish or German-speaking worlds should be celebrated, along with more 'traditional' customs.

What might progression look like? What do look out for and emphasise in your teaching

Since the National Curriculum Programme of Study only tells us where pupils should be by the end of Year 6, we must make sure that our schemes of work break down learning into manageable steps, which allow pupils to demonstrate progression over time. As a rule of thumb, learners should move from saying, understanding, reading and writing single, familiar words in Year 3 to generating increasingly complex sentences with increasingly unfamiliar vocabulary as they progress through Key Stage 2.

Key misconceptions and specific issues to be aware of:

Ensure that pupils are aware of the concept of 'false friends' - words which look like they have the same meaning in English but actually mean something very different. Be aware that when reading unfamiliar words in the target language, pupils will often automatically fall back on their knowledge of English phonics. This is why the systematic teaching of phonics is so important. Language that is not regularly used will be lost. Ensure regular revisiting through starter activities and units of work which contain and build on previously-learned vocabulary.

Further questions for reflection

- How should we record pupil progress in languages? Remember, pupils won't be writing every lesson so photos, post-it note observations and videos will all form part of your evidence.
- Is the curriculum building pupil understanding of phonics, vocabulary and grammar? We don't just want to be increasing children's stock of nouns.

Resource links

Lightbulb Languages

Free resources and schemes of work.

Association for Language Learning

Support for the teaching of languages across primary and secondary.

Primary French Project -

Free scheme of work for French.

Cave Languages

Lots of phonics teaching support as well as advice on ensuring progression.

Key questions when observing or teaching this subject

Are units of work built on the three building blocks of phonics, vocabulary and grammar?

Are pupils given opportunities to progress in speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Are pupils actively engaged in language learning?

Do pupils understand *why* they are learning another language.

Do pupils have opportunities to revisit and build on prior learning?

Further reading

Bourdais, D. and Finnie, S. (2015) *Games for Teaching Primary French*. Carmarthen: Crown House Publishing.

Watts, C. and Philips, H. (2014) *Jumpstart! French and German*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Changing Phase Blogspot

Nattalingo website

My Primary Languages Classroom Blog

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