



SHOBNALL PRIMARY & NURSERY SCHOOL

APPROACH TO THE TEACHING OF MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES (MFL)



"With languages, you are at home anywhere."

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INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the teaching, organisation and management of French taught and learnt at Shobnall Primary & Nursery School.

The document has been drawn up as a result of staff discussion and its implementation is the responsibility of all teaching staff. The responsibility for monitoring and review rests with the French subject leader.

The main purposes of this document are:

- To establish an entitlement for all pupils.
- To establish expectations for teachers of this subject.
- To promote continuity and coherence across the school.

VISION

“At Shobnall Primary School, our vision is to enable children to have a strong awareness of the culture of the country where the language is spoken. They will have a passion for languages and a commitment to the subject!”

PRINCIPLES

UNDERSTAND	We ensure our pupils have the confidence to speak with good intonation and pronunciation in French. They have some fluency in reading and imagination in writing.
USE	We encourage our pupils to have the ability to use language creatively and spontaneously.
UTILISE	We motivate our pupils to have an independence in their studies and the ability to draw upon a wide range of resources.

THEORY UNDERPINNING OUR PRACTICE AND PRINCIPLES

Languages are an integral part of a broad, balanced curriculum. Learning a language is ‘a liberation from insularity and provides an opening to other cultures’ (*Languages programmes of study, 2013*). It helps to equip pupils with the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life and encourages pupils to appreciate and celebrate difference. Our languages curriculum provides the foundation for learning French and enables pupils to learn about a different culture and the language spoken, having a potential positive impact on business and the economy.

Allowing languages to flourish is something which is of high importance at Shobnall Primary School. Language has the opportunity to develop pupils’ self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the belief we have in our own ability, specifically to meet challenges and complete a task successfully. Studies have shown that pupils’ self-efficacy consistently results in academic achievement more than motivational factors and also improves language proficiency (*Graham and Weiner, 2012*).

The following are likely to have a positive impact on pupils’ self-efficacy:

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- Language-learning experiences that pupils perceive as successful (*Leeming, 2017*).
- Knowing how to sound out words in a foreign language (*Erler and Macaro, 2011*).
- Ensuring that the building blocks of language are in place so that pupils can exercise greater autonomy.
- Seeing non-native peers communicating effectively (*Mills, 2009*).

As a school we scrutinised the best research available and we have determined that our **definition of learning** is a **change to the long-term memory**. This means that the way we implement our curriculum maps involves repetitive teaching of the key concepts or the 'big' ideas. Each unit has built in practise, retrieval and reinforcement of the key concepts to ensure knowledge sticks in the long-term memory. For learning to stick in the **long-term memory** we teach historical knowledge in meaningful contexts and in a connected way.

Long-term memory involves three main areas:

1. Procedural memory where procedures such as placing events in order and other skills are stored. Procedures, once fluent, become automatic and are referred to as non-declarative.
2. Semantic memory where facts and their meaning is stored.
3. Episodic memory where the activities to learn the processes and facts are remembered and act as memory cues.

Both semantic and episodic memory involve conscious thought and are therefore referred to as declarative.

We have used the research around **cognitive load** and how children learn most effectively, to determine our approach to implementing the curriculum. Research has shown that If you teach children too many new concepts at once their short-term memory becomes overloaded and none of the knowledge will stick and move into the long term. We take an approach of **spacing** out new knowledge combined with interleaving and plenty of retrieval practise to ensure learning sticks. With **repetition, interleaving and retrieval**, research we use suggests that the more often children have to remember knowledge the more likely it just to be cemented into the long-term memory.

In order for pupils to progress effectively, the language curriculum needs to be planned carefully by considering the building blocks of the subject (in languages, the sounds, words and rules about how these connect to create sentences and meanings) and the sequence of these blocks.

This is not a reductive approach. The goals of having pupils broaden their horizons, converse fluently with others, fully explore cultures and strengthen their economic prospects can only be reached if we build firm foundations of language learning. Only by mastering the basics can pupils engage fully in the process of language learning, which they can then use to communicate about an increasingly wide range of themes. With increasing linguistic ability, cultural awareness can become ever more refined. To improve learners' understanding and production of language, a steady development in understanding of phonics, vocabulary, grammar and their interplay is needed.

Typically, language assessment systems incorporate these 3 'pillars':

- the system of the sounds of a language and how these are represented in written words (or scripts other than Roman)
- vocabulary
- grammar, including inflectional and/or derivational features (the systems for changing the form of a word and for creating new words, respectively) and syntax (*Bauckham, 2016*).

Language is more than the simple sum of its parts. Models of language ability mention other competencies that enable communication with different kinds of people, in different contexts, for different purposes (*Bachman, 1990*).

These include:

- sociolinguistic competence (the understanding of how social context affects language use; this clearly includes cultural awareness)
- pragmatic competence (the ability to understand the relationship between what is said and what is intended)
- discourse competence (the ability to express oneself coherently across longer stretches of language)

These are in addition to a core of linguistic knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and phonics (Common European Framework of Reference for languages: learning, teaching, assessment, 2001).

However, when learning languages, the main tasks for beginners are:

- learning the sounds, vocabulary and grammar of the language
- understanding and producing these when they are combined

Learners understand language when reading and listening. They produce language when speaking and writing. Speaking, listening, reading and writing are the 4 'modalities' of language.

Through learning and practice, the range, complexity and accuracy of the grammatical features and the breadth and depth of learners' vocabulary knowledge will increase over time.

INTENT

Curriculum drivers shape our curriculum breadth. They are derived from an exploration of the backgrounds of our pupils, our beliefs about high-quality education and our values. They are used to ensure we give our pupils appropriate and ambitious curriculum opportunities:

- Diversity – We believe in developing pupils' understanding of British values and celebrating our unique and diverse community.
- Dreams – We promote ambition, high aspirations and foster pupils' capacity to see the possibilities within the world today.
- Decisions – We encourage our pupils to make the right choices in order to stay safe, healthy and happy.

Cultural capital gives our pupils the vital background knowledge required to be informed and thoughtful members of our community who understand and believe in British values.

Curriculum breadth is shaped by our curriculum drivers, cultural capital, subject topics and our ambition for pupils to study the best of what has been thought and said by many generations of academics and scholars.

Our curriculum distinguishes between subject topics and threshold concepts. Subject topics are the specific aspects of subjects that are studied. Threshold concepts tie together the subject topics into meaningful schema. The same concepts are explored in a wide breadth of topics. Through this 'forwards-and-backwards engineering' of the curriculum, pupils return to the same concepts over and over, and gradually build understanding of them.

For each of the threshold concepts, three milestones (each of which includes the procedural and semantic knowledge pupils need to understand the threshold concepts) provide a progression model.

Knowledge categories in each subject give pupils a way of expressing their understanding of the threshold concepts.

Knowledge webs help pupils to relate each topic to previously studied topics and to form strong, meaningful schema. Cognitive science tells us that working memory is limited and that cognitive load is too high if pupils are rushed through content. This limits the acquisition of long-term memory. Cognitive science also tells us that in order for pupils to become creative thinkers, or have a greater depth of understanding, they must first master the basics, which takes time.

Within each milestone, pupils gradually progress in their procedural fluency and semantic strength through three cognitive domains: basic, advancing and deep. The goal for pupils is to display sustained mastery at the advancing stage of understanding by the end of each milestone and for the most able to have a greater depth of understanding at the deep stage. The timescale for sustained mastery or greater depth is, therefore, two years of study.

As part of our progression model we use a different pedagogical style in each of the cognitive domains of basic, advancing and deep. This is based on the research of Sweller, Kirschner and Rosenshine who argue for direct instruction in the early stages of learning and discovery-based approaches later. We use direct instruction in the basic domain and problem-based discovery in the deep domain. This is called the reversal effect.

Also as part of our progression model we use POP tasks (Proof of Progress) which show our curriculum expectations in each cognitive domain.

IMPLEMENTATION

Our curriculum design is based on evidence from cognitive science; three main principles underpin it:

- Learning is most effective with spaced repetition.
- Interleaving helps pupils to discriminate between topics and aids long-term retention.
- Retrieval of previously learned content is frequent and regular, which increases both storage and retrieval strength.

In addition to the three principles, we also understand that learning is invisible in the short term and that sustained mastery takes time.

Our content is subject specific. We make intra-curricular links to strengthen schema. Continuous provision, in the form of daily routines, replaces the teaching of some aspects of the curriculum and, in other cases, provides retrieval practice for previously learned content.

Pupils study French for between 1 and 2 hours per fortnight. This time is organised into 'blocks' where pupils will study French for a number of sessions before studying another subject.

Cross curricular outcomes in French are specifically planned for, with strong links between the French curriculum and literacy lessons enabling further learning. Planning is informed by and aligned with the National Curriculum. In addition, staff have access to the Twinkl scheme of work, including resources and planning materials, however, teachers lesson design is not limited to this.

IMPACT

Because learning is a change to long-term memory, it is impossible to see impact in the short term. We do, however, use probabilistic assessment based on deliberate practice. This means that we look at the practices taking place to determine whether they are appropriate, related to our goals and likely to produce results in the long run.

We use comparative judgement in two ways: in the tasks we set (POP tasks) and in comparing a student's work over time.

We use lesson observations to see if the pedagogical style matches our depth expectations.

Pupils attainment and progress in French is measured against the objectives set in the National Curriculum and recorded by teachers using Classroom Monitor to inform parents and future teaching and learning activities.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN FRENCH

Effective teaching ensures that pupils retain knowledge they have learned in the long term. This is supported by opportunities to revisit and practise with prior knowledge. Pupils are more likely to retain knowledge when they have engaged analytically with the content they study. Teachers can support learning through clear exposition, which takes into account what pupils already know and understand. Wider educational research offers a strong basis for a range of effective teaching approaches in French. These are often reflected in our lessons and will include:

- **Teaching for memory** - evidence suggests that teachers can support pupils' long-term learning by drawing attention to particularly important terms and expressions, precise phenomena and broader frameworks in their teaching.
- **Recall** - recalling previously taught content (retrieval practice) and revisiting content in lessons (spaced practice) have also been shown to be effective in securing pupils' knowledge over time.
- **Clear exposition that considers pupils' prior knowledge** - teachers' exposition is likely to be most effective when it is clear and carefully designed to account for pupils' existing knowledge.
- **The 3 pillars of language** – it is essential that the curriculum focuses on the building blocks of language (phonics, grammar and vocabulary) to ensure effective linguistic progression. It is imperative that teachers consider the phonics of the language being studied, focusing on how children pronounce sounds and how these are represented in writing. Over time, pupils develop their ability to manipulate language step-by-step, steadily increasing in grammatical concepts.
- **Verbal communication** – Pupils should be provided with regular opportunities to practise pronunciation through verbal communication activities.

SUPPORTING PUPILS IN FRENCH, INCLUDING PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND/OR DISABILITIES (SEND)

We recognise that in all classes children have a wide range of ability in French, and we seek to provide suitable learning opportunities for all children by matching the challenge of the task to the ability of the child. Pupils with low prior attainment are very unlikely to opt to study languages later in life and the proportion of those with SEND engaging in languages later in life is low, often with staff expertise, curriculum planning, time allocation and transition being cited as barriers at Key Stage 2. We have addressed these barriers in our planning to ensure that all pupils are able to access the curriculum effectively.

All pupils are entitled to a broad French curriculum. Any adaptations made to support pupils' learning in French usually should not be to the overall curriculum content but rather to how the

content is taught. In the case of pupils with the most complex learning needs, there may be occasions when it is appropriate to modify the curriculum. However, this will be the exception.

Ensuring that all pupils otherwise encounter the same content is particularly important given the role that hinterland information has in facilitating learning in French. This suggests that significantly reducing content or complexity for some pupils might in fact limit their access to content or limit their ability to learn. It is likely that pupils will benefit most from support that combines extra attention to securing the most generative knowledge, while ensuring that all pupils are able to learn about events and periods in a rich context and through meaningful examples. This can be achieved by:

- setting tasks which are open-ended and can have a variety of responses;
- setting tasks of increasing difficulty, some children not completing all tasks;
- grouping children by ability in the room, and setting different tasks for each ability group;
- providing resources of different complexity, depending on the ability of the child;
- using teaching assistants to support children individually or in groups.

PROMOTING KEY SKILLS IN FRENCH

Through our teaching of French, we provide opportunities for pupils to develop the key skills of:

- **Phonics**, through regular exercises where pupils can focus on clear and reliable pronunciation and the links between sounds and spelling, which are integral to learning a second language. The ability to decode words also helps learners when reading texts, enhances autonomy and can improve vocabulary learning.
- **Vocabulary**, through reading ability and grammatical awareness. This is built explicitly into the curriculum, with the choice of vocabulary being carefully considered to build on prior knowledge.
- **Grammar**, through revising grammatical concepts and structures, which has been sequenced appropriately, taking into consideration the key objectives from the English National Curriculum.
- **Comprehending language**, through providing pupils with regular opportunities to communicate in French to practise pronunciation through speaking and listening activities and presenting information and opinions in a variety of ways.
- **Co-operation**, through planning and carrying out enrichment activities that develop pupils' cultural capital through learning about a different culture and visiting another country.
- **Authenticity of spoken and written texts**, through the selection of high-quality texts chosen for their linguistic content and level, which teachers have planned their use of carefully, being mindful to not expose pupils to large amounts of unfamiliar language.

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

Early years explore language through the 'Communication and Language' strand of the EYFS curriculum. This involves the development of children's spoken language, which unpins all areas of learning and development. Children's back-and-forth interactions from an early age form the foundations for language and cognitive development. Pupils begin to learn the foundations of phonics and are exposed to enrichment activities surrounding language, including our celebration of Languages Day, where their learning is themed around this event. They are assessed according to the Progress Models determined by the school in accordance with the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

KEY STAGE 1

Pupils continue to develop their phonic knowledge and increase their oral vocabulary through well-planned lessons. Teachers ensure that their teaching progresses pupils' ability to understand and use a variety of grammatical structures. Pupils begin to learn the foundations of phonics and are exposed to enrichment activities surrounding language, including our celebration of Languages Day, where their learning is themed around this event.

KEY STAGE 2

Teaching focuses on enabling pupils to make substantial progress in French. The teaching provides an appropriate balance of spoken and written language and lays the foundations for further foreign language teaching at key stage 3. It enables pupils to understand and communicate ideas, facts and feelings in speech and writing, focused on familiar and routine matters, using their knowledge of phonology, grammatical structures and vocabulary.

PLANNING AND RESOURCES

We use the National Curriculum scheme of work as the basis for our planning in French and implement this through the use of Twinkl, appropriately adapted by the teacher to suit the learners within each class. We ensure that there are opportunities for children of all abilities to develop their skills and knowledge in each unit, and we plan progression into the scheme of work, so that the children are increasingly challenged as they move through the school. We carry out curriculum planning in French in three phases (long term, medium term and short term). The long-term plan maps the French topics studied in each term during each key stage. We teach the knowledge, skills and understanding set out in the National Curriculum through the corresponding programme of study. The class teacher uses the Twinkl PowerPoint Presentations and adapts these to suit the needs within their class. These plans list the specific learning objectives and expected outcomes for each lesson. The class teacher keeps these individual plans, although he/she and the subject leader often discuss them on an informal basis. Plans are stored on the staff shared drive for monitoring purposes and ease of access for the teachers and French subject leader.

There are sufficient resources for teaching all French units in the school. They are located in the shared resource area. Bilingual dictionaries are available in each classroom, freely available for the pupils to access and there are copies of physical flashcard resources for Lower Key Stage Two in the lower key stage cupboard.

CROSS-CURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES

Staff are encouraged to develop cross-curricular links with French and other subjects to provide a relevant and meaningful curriculum for pupils.

English

The learning of a modern foreign language naturally contributes to the development of the three pillars of language. It also develops the children's grasp of linguistic features such as rhyme, rhythm, stress and intonation, helps them understand the concept of register (as required for the French tu/vous distinction), and emphasises the importance of knowing the role of different word types in sentence structure.

Mathematics

Children reinforce their time-telling skills by playing time-related games in the foreign language. We play number games, too, that reinforce their counting and calculation skills, expand their understanding of date, and increase their knowledge about money.

Personal, Social and Health Education and Citizenship

One of the main benefits to the children of learning a modern foreign language at primary school level is a social one. Those children who have difficulty in reading and writing, but who

have good aural skills, will often find that they excel at speaking in foreign languages. This success breeds confidence, which in turn increases self-esteem and gives them a more positive attitude to school in general.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Education

By teaching a modern foreign language, we contribute to the children's cultural education. They learn that many societies are multi-lingual. We teach them about festivals and customs related to the countries in which the language is spoken. We also give them the chance to hear stories set in the foreign culture. Learning about another culture and visiting another country contributes to a child's cultural capital.

Geography

We ask the children to do research on the different countries in which the particular foreign language is spoken (after they have first found them on a map or a globe). MFL pupils likewise learn about the climate and culture of the countries in which the language is spoken.

Music

We teach children songs in the modern foreign language – both traditional and modern – which of course helps them develop a sense of rhythm and an ear for melody. We also play them classical music by composers from the countries in question (e.g. Saint-Saëns's 'Carnival of the Animals' in the case of France).

ASSESSMENT

Assessment for learning is continuous throughout the planning, teaching and learning cycle. Key knowledge is taught to enable and promote the development of children's French/language skills. Assessment is supported by use of the following strategies:

- Observing children at work, individually, in pairs, in a group and in class during whole class teaching.
- Using differentiated, open-ended questions that require children to explain and unpick their understanding.
- Providing effective feedback, including interactive marking through green pen questions where appropriate, to engage children with their learning and to provide opportunities for self-assessment, consolidation, depth and target setting.
- Book moderation and monitoring of outcomes of work, to evaluate the range and balance of work and to ensure that tasks meet the needs of different learners, with the acquisition of the pre-identified key knowledge of each topic being evidenced through the outcomes.
- Use of Proof of Progress (POP) tasks.
- Use of KWL grids ('what I know already, what I want to know and what I have learnt') throughout a unit, alongside specific and measureable learning objectives for each lesson.

Pupils attainment and progress in French is recorded by teachers using Classroom Monitor to inform parents and future teaching and learning activities.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

We enable all pupils to have access to the full range of activities involved in learning French. Where children are to participate in activities outside the classroom, teachers should be aware of health and safety issues. Risk assessments are undertaken prior to activities, to ensure that they are safe and appropriate for all pupils. Before undertaking a trip, teachers are encouraged to visit the proposed area of study and fill in a risk assessment form. Occasionally, pupils are provided with the opportunity to taste-test various French food items, when these activities are planned teachers must refer to the medical information for their class to ensure they are aware

of any allergies or intolerances. Further information can be found in the Health and Safety and Wellbeing Document and Educational Visits Document.

SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION

We seek to safeguard children and young people by:

- valuing them, listening to them and respecting them;
- adopting child protection guidelines through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers;
- recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made;
- sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers;
- sharing information about concerns, with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately;
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.

See Safeguarding and Child Protection Document for further information.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

It is the responsibility of the French subject leader:

- supports colleagues in their teaching, by keeping informed about current developments in French and by providing a strategic lead and direction for this subject;
- to develop, implement and review an action plan for French;
- to monitor French throughout the school;
- to encourage staff to provide effective learning opportunities for all pupils;
- to develop valid activities, appropriate for children at different stages of development, which enable pupils to progress in the subject.

Monitoring of the standards of children's work and of the quality of teaching in French is the responsibility of the French subject leader. The work of the subject leader also involves supporting colleagues in their teaching, being informed about current developments in the subject, and providing a strategic lead and direction for the subject in the school.

This document will be reviewed at least every three years.