
EVALUATION OF THE KEY STAGE 2 LANGUAGE LEARNING PATHFINDERS

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This report presents the findings from the two year evaluation of the Primary Languages Pathfinder programme conducted by the Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research (CEDAR) at the University of Warwick.

Key Findings

Content and Delivery

- French is by far the most dominant language in the Pathfinders.
- Working forwards from Year 3 proved more successful than introducing languages initially in Years 5 or 6 and then implementing them further down the age range. Some schools were moving towards providing languages from Year 3 to Year 6.
- Time for languages was found successfully in Pathfinder schools and in the best examples incorporated elements of discrete language lessons, curricular integration and cross curricular links.
- Languages were generally received enthusiastically by pupils, parents and teachers and there was a perceived positive impact on pupils' wider learning.
- Where schemes of work had been designed, adapted or provided, language learning was more effective and teacher confidence was higher, particularly where this had been carried out collaboratively.
- Cultural content and native speaker contact had enriched the language learning experience for many Pathfinder pupils.
- There remained considerable development necessary in the area of differentiation in language teaching. Nonetheless, many examples of good classroom practice were found across the Pathfinders.

Teacher Competence

- Languages were taught in the Pathfinders by a wide variety of staff, including most frequently non-specialist class teachers, foreign language assistants and outreach teachers from secondary schools.
- Effective models employing outreach teachers incorporated a process of empowering class teachers to gain in confidence and competence to work towards longer term sustainability.
- Collaborative 'clusters' of schools were also very beneficial in this regard. Class teachers' confidence in languages remained fairly low, despite the majority having obtained some form of language qualification.
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) differentiated as appropriate and incorporating linguistic competence as well as methodology was found to be vital in addressing this aspect.
- The provision of quality resources was a major contributor to teacher confidence and thereby increased competence.
- Training was crucial for both primary and secondary staff to enable primary languages to achieve success.

Progression and Assessment

- Some Pathfinders had devised schemes of work with differentiated activities and materials matched to rising levels of difficulty to ensure progression within each year and upward through the years. However, in some cases these were not developed throughout KS2.

- In some instances there were challenges in achieving progression, for example, where children received the same content in different years with no overall strategy for progression from year to year. This problem resulted from staff moving between different year groups and limited staff expertise.
- In the majority of Pathfinders the Languages Ladder was an unknown aspect of national provision. Some Pathfinders were using the European Languages Portfolio but this was not necessarily consistent across all schools. One Pathfinder used a tiered language award with criteria.
- Generally assessment was underdeveloped in many Pathfinders. Even where assessment formed part of the local authority scheme of work and devised units, it was not always carried out and practice varied within Pathfinders.
- A range of assessment strategies was used across the case study schools which mainly involved informal monitoring.
- Recording of assessment evidence was limited although there were very good examples of practice including profile cards or sheets to record pupils' progress.
- In some Pathfinders, however, little or no attention had been paid to measuring pupils' progress. Indeed, there was some resistance to the notion of an imposed scheme and the worry that introducing assessment would change the whole nature of the experience. Individual feedback to pupils was often lacking, yet pupils were keen to receive this.

Transition and Transfer

- Primary-secondary patterns of transfer were complex in the majority of Pathfinder local authorities. This created real challenge in achieving continuity and progression where secondary schools received pupils from a large range of feeder schools.
- Lack of continuity in a language was a concern voiced by many, especially where the secondary school changed its Year 7 language from year to year. However, some teachers were not concerned about the change of language as they felt pupils were developing generic transferable language skills.
- In some Pathfinder schools effective transition and transfer arrangements were in place, or were developing and a minority of

schools/Pathfinders were working towards a transfer document including information relating specifically to languages for transfer to secondary school.

- In many schools no meetings had taken place between primary and secondary staff. Where liaison between sectors had taken place, in particular mutual observation, this had been beneficial in encouraging teachers to evaluate their own practice.
- Very few schools mentioned any link with the KS3 Framework and a minority of schools mentioned NC levels sent to the secondary school.
- There is little knowledge amongst many primary teachers about how or if work in primary will be carried on in secondary school, and some teachers feel disheartened and frustrated that good primary languages practice in primary might be neither acknowledged nor built on at secondary.
- In some cases secondary schools were responding to work done in primaries by rethinking the KS3 curriculum or being aware of the need to rethink.

Sustainability and Replicability

- In most Pathfinder Local Authorities (LAs), there was a strong expectation that primary languages would be sustained at least at the level achieved during the Pathfinder funding.
- Schools already providing a language learning experience to all pupils throughout KS2 were very much in the minority. Provision in many schools depended on the location of staff with some foreign language skill or with the willingness to get involved.
- Threats to sustainability and growth were often associated with staff movement either within the school or away from the school.
- Of those schools *without* languages already part of the curriculum through KS2, few had made plans for extending their current provision.
- Where LAs had responsibility for deploying visiting teachers or assistants, provision was more likely to be planned in a way that supported continuity of learning.
- While some primary teachers had risen admirably to the challenge of teaching languages, there was a significant number who did not yet appear ready to take on full responsibility for its delivery, relying heavily on visiting teachers. Without significantly more training, linguistic and pedagogical, it seems unlikely that they will be ready to 'go it alone' in three or four years' time.

- Pupil interviews provided much evidence of positive attitudes towards their language learning but, occasionally, there were also signs that the enthusiasm and initial sense of progress were tempered with some concerns about the repetitive nature of their lessons and recognition of increasing difficulties ahead, especially by Year 6 pupils nearing the end of their primary education.

Cost Analysis

- The overall mean cost of the Pathfinder per LA was calculated as being £400,461 including primary teacher teaching time, or £272,520 not including primary teacher teaching time.
- The bulk of this was made up of personnel costs, which accounted for over 92% of total costs. Most of the remainder was made up of the cost of resources (7%), with travel costs and communication costs making up a small proportion of the total. When teacher teaching time was deducted from overall costs, staff costs fell to 89% of total costs, with resources up to 10%.
- Costs differed significantly between local authorities, from a mean of £719 per school in the lowest case, to a mean of £19,374 in the highest case including teaching time, and a mean of £622 in the lowest and £16,895 in the highest not including teaching time.
- The analysis revealed the need to take account of the sensitivity of certain assumptions in arriving at these estimates. These should be taken into account when considering these results.

Methodology

The evaluation was carried out using a mixed methodology approach, which included telephone interviews, case studies and questionnaires. The evaluation comprised five elements:

1. Telephone interviews of key staff in all Pathfinder LAs and collection and analysis of documentary evidence from Pathfinder LAs
2. A survey study in all Pathfinder LAs
3. In-depth case studies in a sample of Pathfinder LAs
4. Cost analysis of the different models
5. A desk study of existing research and analysis of existing datasets

In order to obtain an initial picture of the type of initiatives, telephone interviews were held during January to February 2004 with LA advisors with responsibility for the Pathfinder at LA level in the 19 LAs, which were repeated the following year.

Questionnaires were sent out to a sample of 500 schools from all Pathfinder areas, once at the start and once towards the end of the project, to allow investigation of change. The aim of the questionnaires was to collect descriptive data on the workings of the project in their schools, as well as their views on added value, effectiveness of workforce models, training, inclusiveness, support from the local authority and impact on the curriculum, teacher and pupil motivation and learning

A series of eight case studies was identified in order to explore the operation of Pathfinders on the ground, including the *interaction* between systems and schools, not just systems per se. Case studies here are defined as Pathfinder LAs within each of which a sample of schools was studied. The case studies were also intended to identify examples of effective practice and factors that might impede such practice, and so suggest implementation mechanisms and processes which could be generalisable and hence of interest to practitioners and policy makers.

Key Recommendations

- All primary schools should be encouraged to draw up a *policy document* for Primary Languages provision with a rationale, clear short and longer term aims, and an indication of outcomes expected, staffing, time allocation, scheme of work, resources, assessment procedures, and transition arrangements.
- Languages are most effectively integrated into the curriculum by working upwards from Year 3 and schools should be encouraged to make a start in this way.
- Schemes of work should be devised, used and developed in all cases, ideally collaboratively with other.
- Schools should be encouraged to set aside at least 40 minutes weekly plus 20 minutes incidental time for primary languages.
- Catering for the needs of all pupils and differentiation strategies in languages should be a focus for schools.
- Primary teachers' linguistic competence (and confidence) should be a priority for training.

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- CPD needs to be provided for a range of deliverers: As well as primary teachers, for FLAs, native speakers from within the community, HLTAs and TAs, and secondary teachers, including ASTs.
- Primary and secondary schools should be encouraged to work in clusters, in order to build up networks, inter-school contacts between primary and secondary and to facilitate joint planning and preparation of materials.
- Assessment opportunities should be built into the schemes of work.
- Transition arrangements for primary languages between primary and secondary sectors should be improved.
- KS2 and KS3 should be thought of as a coherent whole, not as two separate programmes.
- Primary headteachers need more information about the value of foreign language learning.
- There is need for better dissemination of good practice within and across local authorities, especially involving headteachers, in order to support the integration of languages in the curriculum.
- Local authorities should appoint specialist primary language advisors or advisory teachers to oversee training and co-ordination of resources.

Additional Information

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