

Assessment in Modern Foreign Languages in the Primary School

The National Curriculum statutory requirement from September 2014 asks Key Stage Two pupils and teachers to focus on making substantial progress in at least one modern or ancient foreign language. This offers a welcome opportunity for Primary and Secondary school colleagues to take a fresh look together at what language learning is for, nurturing curiosity and knowledge about the world, as well as providing a focus on practical communication and creating the foundation to a potential lifelong language learning journey.

We propose that the following principles should underpin approaches to the assessment of language learning:

- Effective assessment practice in language learning should foster motivation, enjoyment and progress in learners.
- Assessment should support learners to feel confident and successful and help build resilience, enthusiasm and persistence in continuing to learn languages.
- Assessment should be embedded in the language learning process, respecting that language development includes making mistakes, whilst also establishing high expectations for individuals.
- All learners should be able to describe their own progress in ways that can be fully understood by themselves, their parents/guardians and other stakeholders in primary and secondary schools
- Monitoring and describing progress in language learning should be consistent across Key Stage 2 (KS2):
Eg, the Primary MFL coordinator should monitor and advise on the consistency of delivery and track progress within and across KS2. Schools should include the development of effective assessment in language learning as part of their school improvement and development plans. Schools (and learners) will gain from good practice being shared and moderated between schools.

Language learning at Key Stage 3 should build on the transferable skills and knowledge which primary school learners will bring to their Secondary foreign language learning, even if the language studied may be different. Assessment should motivate learners at this point to recognize their strengths in meeting a new challenge.

- Primary and Secondary colleagues together should consider how best to share information about language learning in the primary phase, and how to develop and build on this: see Appendix A *Checklist for Primary Languages and Assessment.*
- Primary and Secondary colleagues together should consider what being 'Secondary-ready' in language learning means and how learners might be well prepared for this transition:
see
Appendix B *Secondary-ready in foreign languages*
Appendix C *Secondary-ready: Beginning to use verbs*
Appendix D *Am I ready?*

We have selected the following guidance on assessment in language learning as starting points to support teachers and schools:

- DfE *Assessment Principles*: generic policy information for all schools on developing effective assessment systems <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/assessment-principles-school-curriculum>
- The *Association for Language Learning (ALL)* hosts free pages of **resources, advice and guidance for language teachers, language coordinators and head teachers. It provides a gateway to further free online support from a wide range of websites including cultural institutes, educational institutions, local authorities, blogs and publishers:** <http://www.all-languages.org.uk/>
- The *Junior European Language Portfolio* is designed to help young learners record their progress and achievement in languages: <http://www.bcatml.org/PORTFOLIO/portfolio-junior.pdf>
- The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR): Learning, Teaching, Assessment* is a framework of reference used in Europe, designed to provide a transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching and learning materials, and the assessment of foreign language proficiency: http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/cadre1_en.asp
- DCSF *Key Stage 2 framework for languages* offers non-statutory guidelines and guidance for assessing language learning at KS2, including examples of expected outcomes from Year 3 to Year 6: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110511211850/http://nationalstrategies.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/node/85274>
- DfE/CfBT *Languages Support Programme Projects Overview* outlines action research into good practice in 94 language projects from 33 Teaching Schools Alliances (TSA): <http://www.camteach.org.uk/78/dfecfbt-languages-support-programme> This includes the Westdene TSA's project on the *Assessment of Languages in the Primary Classroom* <http://www.thelifecloud.net/schools/WTSA/spaces/LanguageSupportProgramme/>
- Cultural institutes are developing their support for the teaching and assessment of languages in primary schools. Visit their websites for further information, eg, French: <http://culturetheque.org.uk/blog/getting-started-with-primary-french>
German: <http://www.goethe.de/ins/gb/lon/lhr/stu/ks2/enindex.htm>
Spanish: <http://www.mecd.gob.es/reinounido/publicaciones-materiales/material-didactico.html#material-reino-unido1>

Appendix A Checklist for Primary Languages Evidence and Assessment*

Across the curriculum, an evidence checklist for assessment purposes is helpful for teachers and MFL Coordinators and may include:

Suggested examples of evidence to support the assessment process	
Observation Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>post-its</i> about children's responses, comprehension, pronunciation, use and understanding of a range of vocabulary (including verbs) and grammar- conversation notes with MFL coordinator about progression
Samples of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- any written evidence- audio/video/digital evidence of role play or activities- photographic evidence- display
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- short, medium and long-term- cross-curricular- highlighted objectives on planning- annotated (e.g. traffic-lighted) class list- opportunities through the school day
Resources: ensure a range which is accessible, age appropriate, inclusive, culturally authentic, cross curricular, gives opportunity for progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- schemes of work- CD- DVDs- websites- online resources- books- photos- food and drink- puppets- partner school- <i>realia</i> (authentic materials)
Context: consider factors which affect the learning and progression of students such as	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- who is teaching, e.g., specialist teacher, class teacher?- who is supporting, e.g., native speaking parent, teaching assistant?- what is the frequency and amount of curriculum time?- what are the assessment aims and transition arrangements?- what are the materials / content of what is being taught?

*Adapted from Maynard, S. (2012) *Teaching Foreign Languages in the Primary School*. London and New York: Routledge. *Primary Languages evidence and assessment checklist*, p.86.

Appendix B Being Secondary-Ready in Foreign Languages

By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils will...¹

A Know why they are learning a FL

1. Know why it is good to learn a language in addition to English.
2. Know where some FLs are spoken globally, and some facts about the culture, people, and places in at least one of them.

B Know ways to help themselves learn and use a FL

1. Know and be able to describe some strategies that help them to remember key words and phrases
2. Have practised using strategies when they don't understand e.g. using other words and the situation to guess meanings; looking at the end of words to work out meaning (e.g. common endings of nouns, adjectives, adverbs; clues about gender, singular/plural, tense, case)
3. Understand the term 'cognate' and 'near-cognate', and use knowledge of these to work out meanings
4. Have had experience working with a bilingual dictionary, know what it contains, how it is constructed, and how to use it both to learn a FL and learn *about* a FL
5. Understand that online dictionaries, translator websites and Apps cannot be trusted to translate accurately, and know some of the kind of language problems that can be caused by them

C Have some understanding of how a FL works

1. Be able to use grammatical terms about English and a FL e.g. noun, verb, adjective, adverb, pronoun, connective/conjunction
2. Recognise that word order can be different in different languages (e.g. adjectives before or after a noun), and understand that word order can change the meaning of sentences e.g. making a question or a negative
3. Appreciate that a FL can use words (grammatical 'glue') that are not needed in English (e.g. *je joue au tennis*); and *vice versa* English has grammatical words that are not used or are used differently in FLs e.g. auxiliaries (e.g. *do / have / be*) + verb
4. Be able to talk about the 'gender of nouns' and 'adjectival agreement', and appreciate that English can be seen as the 'odd one out' compared to many European languages e.g. French, Spanish, German and Italian
5. Understand the word 'tense' and that in some languages a verb ending can express when something happens, and have compared this to English
6. Have some awareness that whether an event is 'ongoing' or 'finished' can be expressed differently in a FL compared to English (e.g. English ongoing expressions *I am / was eating* = *Je mange / mangeais*; English 'finished' expression *I ate* = *J' ai mangé*)

D Have produced some FL in speech and writing

1. Have used scaffolded phrases and sentences to create their own spoken and written sentences, using a variety of resources
2. Have had regular experience of talking to others in a FL (even if with a limited set of vocabulary and phrases) where mistakes are expected as a natural indication of progression in speaking.

E Have listened to and understood a FL

1. Have listened to spoken language to notice and understand particular items e.g. a phoneme, word, or phrase
2. Have heard a FL being used in everyday life at school, including during FL lessons (e.g. instructions, praise, questions, greetings)

F Have some emerging literacy in a FL

1. Have learned that sound-spelling relations change across languages - spellings can look the same as English, but sound different, e.g., 'ai' and 'ou' make different sounds in English and French; 'w' makes different sounds in German and English; 'z' makes a different sound in Spanish and English. Some letters and letter combinations make sounds that do not exist in English e.g. 'j' and 'rr' in Spanish, 'on' in French
2. Have an awareness that symbols (e.g. accents, cedillas and umlauts) can exist in a FL, and what they do
3. Have seen, heard and read out loud some of the written script (e.g. alphabet) in a FL e.g. be able to spell their name out loud or write it in another script
4. Be able to understand and read out loud words and simple phrases in a FL
5. Have experienced noticing specific items in writing (e.g. words, phrases, capital letters, phonemes/graphemes, pronouns) in a variety of FL texts (e.g. story, song, weather report, newspaper article, letter, post card)

¹ Examples are illustrative only, varying with the Foreign Language (FL) being studied and the local context.

Appendix C Being Secondary-Ready: Beginning to Use Verbs

Verbs allow learners to create their own sentences to express their own meanings, and they drive progression. It is **important to provide opportunities for learners to understand and produce verbs right from the start**. Accuracy develops gradually, as learners become able to manipulate verbs. Many common verbs are irregular i.e. they change in unpredictable ways when the verb is used for a particular context (e.g. subject, number, tense). Research shows that changing verbs to suit the context is learnt slowly, with 'mistakes' particularly when speaking.

As a guide, by the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils would be able **to understand about 20 of the most common verbs in a FL**. They would be able **to produce about 10 common verbs** (though some may be in a form that is not accurate in all contexts e.g. an 'infinitive' or 'short' form such as je faire; la fille aller; nous aime; j'ai boire).

High frequency verbs in FLs include *equivalents* for most of the English verbs below. The specific verbs vary between languages (e.g. il faut + verb is common in French)².

ask
be (e.g. am, was)
be able/can
come
do
drink
eat
find
give
go
have
have to (must / be obliged to)
know
like
look
make
play
put
say / tell
see / watch
take / carry / bring
think
use
want
work

Selected references:

French Language Learner Oral Corpus <http://www.flloc.soton.ac.uk/publications.html#publications>

Spanish Language Learner Oral Corpus <http://www.sploc.soton.ac.uk/>

<http://www.wordfrequency.info/spanish.asp>

<http://corpus.leeds.ac.uk/list.html>

Marsden, E., David, A. (2008). Vocabulary use during conversation: a cross-sectional study of development from year 9 to year 13 among learners of Spanish and French. *Language Learning Journal*, 36, 181–198.

² The list is in alphabetical order of the English, not order of priority or frequency

Appendix D How Can My Language Learning in Primary School Help Me at Secondary School?

This document is designed to support language learning at Primary School and transition in MFL to Secondary School. Please note that examples are illustrative only and will vary with the foreign language being studied and the local context.

It will be helpful if I have learned ...	Why?
<p style="text-align: center;">... why I am learning this language.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know why it is good to learn a language in addition to English. • Know some facts about cultures, people and places where languages other than English are spoken 	<p style="text-align: center;">In Year 7 I will already ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand and appreciate the value of learning a foreign language • understand that learning a language also involves learning about its context in the world
<p style="text-align: center;">... how I can help myself to learn and use this language.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know and describe some strategies which help me to remember key words and phrases. • Practise using strategies to help me understand, such as using other words and the situation to guess meanings, looking at the end of words to work out meaning (eg, common endings of nouns, adjectives and adverbs; clues about gender, singular/plural, tense, case). • Understand the term ‘cognate’ and ‘near-cognate’ and use knowledge of these to work out meanings. • Work with a bilingual dictionary: know what it is, how it is constructed, what it contains, and how to use it effectively to support learning the language and <i>about</i> the language. • Understand that online dictionaries, translator websites and Apps cannot be trusted to translate accurately and know the kind of language problems that can be caused by them. • Use peer and self-assessment strategies to help myself improve my language learning. 	<p style="text-align: center;">In Year 7 I will already ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • know some strategies for memorising new vocabulary in a foreign language • be able to use these strategies to help learn other languages • understand this terminology and feel confident in using it to discuss the vocabulary of a foreign language • know how to find new words in a foreign language by using a bilingual dictionary effectively • know how to use online sources effectively to support my learning • feel confident in knowing how to talk positively about own progress and how to help my peers
<p style="text-align: center;">... how I can talk in an accent that is clearly understandable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have lots of experience of talking to others in the foreign language even if with a limited set of vocabulary and phrases and with some inaccuracies. 	<p style="text-align: center;">In Year 7 I will already ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be familiar with the idea of role-play conversations as a language-learning strategy
<p style="text-align: center;">... how I can listen to and understand this language.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience listening to spoken language to notice and understand particular items, eg, a phoneme, word or phrase. • Hear a foreign language being used in everyday life at school, including during language lessons, (eg, for instructions, praise, questions, comments, greetings). 	<p style="text-align: center;">In Year 7 I will already ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be familiar with listening to spoken foreign language for details and gist • be familiar with the ‘target language’ being used in lessons and the idea of being able to respond or speak the foreign language spontaneously
<p style="text-align: center;">... how I can express my ideas in this language.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practise using scaffolded phrases and sentences to create my own, using a variety of resources such as text cards, vocabulary lists and dictionaries to help me replace words or find my own choices in speaking and writing. 	<p style="text-align: center;">In Year 7 I will already ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feel confident in knowing how to use some resources to support creativity and independence in using the foreign language

It will be helpful if I find out ...	Why?
<p style="text-align: center;">... how I can read and understand this language.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn that sound-spelling relations change across languages - spellings can look the same as English, but sound different, eg,, 'ai' and 'ou' make different sounds in English and French; 'w' makes different sounds in German and English; 'z' makes a different sound in Spanish and English. Some letters and letter combinations make sounds that do not exist in English e.g. 'j' and 'rr' in Spanish, 'on' in French. • See, hear and read out loud some of the written script (eg, alphabet) in a foreign language, eg, be able to spell out my name. • Be able to understand and read out loud words and simple phrases in a foreign language. • Have experienced noticing specific items (eg, words, phrases, capital letters, phonemes and graphemes, pronouns) in a variety of foreign language texts (eg, story, song, weather report, newspaper article, letter, post card). 	<p style="text-align: center;">In Year 7 I will already ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understand that some sounds and letter combinations need to be said differently to English • know that making accurate sounds in another language necessitates making different mouth movements and not be embarrassed to do this • feel confident in tackling the pronunciation of new and unfamiliar vocabulary • be familiar with the idea of skimming and scanning text to find details
<p style="text-align: center;">... how this language works.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be able to use grammatical terms about English and a foreign language, eg, noun, verb, adjective, adverb, pronoun and connective/conjunction. • Recognize that word order is different in different languages (e.g. adjectives before or after a noun), and understand that word order changes the meaning of sentences e.g. making a question or negative. • Appreciate that a foreign language can use words (grammatical 'glue') that are not needed in English, eg, <i>je joue au tennis</i>, and vice versa. • Be able to talk about the 'gender of nouns' and 'adjectival agreement', can talk about what this means, and appreciate that English can be seen as the 'odd one out' compared to many European languages such as, eg, French, Spanish, German and Italian. • Understand the word 'tense' and that in some languages a verb ending can express when something happens, and have compared this to English. Have some awareness that whether an event is 'ongoing' or 'finished' can be expressed differently in a FL compared to English. • Have learned that symbols such as accents, cedillas and umlauts can exist in the foreign language and what they do. • Have seen some verb tables and compared these to the English layout of the same verb so I can notice and discuss any patterns. 	<p style="text-align: center;">In Year 7 I will already ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • know that these terms are useful for talking about English and other languages • know that words are arranged in different ways in different languages and that this can affect the meaning of a sentence • understand that some words need to be added or taken away to convey meaning accurately when translating from one language to another • understand that nouns having a gender is a normal idea in lots of other languages and is important in trying to learn and speak a foreign language accurately • understand that verb endings can change, in both English and a foreign language, when talking about the present, past or the future • understand that a foreign language might differ from English in this way and the role of these symbols • know that verb tables exist and be able to talk about why they might be useful to look at when learning a language

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