



Hampshire
County Council

Improvement and
Advisory Service

HIAS MOODLE OPEN RESOURCE

A Guide to Curriculum Planning in Primary Modern Foreign Languages

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Overview

This document contains...

a presentation of the aims of MFL teaching at Key Stage 2 and practical ideas for long-medium- and short-term planning for MFL lead teachers.

Points to consider when using this resource:

This guide is based on the 2013 National Curriculum for MFL with reference to the requirements of the new GCSE for first teaching in September 2024.

A Guide to Curriculum Planning in Primary Modern Foreign Languages

Why study languages in primary school?

According to the National Curriculum (DFE, 2013), “a high-quality languages education should foster pupils’ curiosity..., enable pupils to express their ideas and thoughts in another language... and encourage them to communicate for practical purposes”. Although topics are not specified, it makes sense to teach those which are accessible and relevant to children and their own personal experience, allowing them to, “communicate ideas, facts and feelings ... on routine matters” (DFE, 2013). We need to remember that the skills used to learn a foreign language are transferrable and will lay the foundations for pupils to learn further languages either at secondary school or in later life. Impactful primary language teaching engages learners and develops a confidence which will continue to key stages 3 and 4 and beyond.

Preparing pupils for future language learning

The 2021 DFE Languages Review emphasised the decrease in MFL uptake at GCSE and A Level and the low proportion of boys, students with SEND and disadvantaged students studying languages. The three pillars of language learning were identified as being central to all children making progress in MFL: vocabulary, phonics and grammar. Indeed, these three aspects are at the heart of the new GCSE (first exams in summer 2026) with explicit phonics teaching being a new emphasis, as pupils are required to complete simple dictations and read short texts aloud in their Year 11 exams. The required list of vocabulary has also been narrowed down from previous specifications following the mantra “less is more”. Finally, the understanding of grammar starts with embedding structures through regular practice in listening, speaking, reading and writing to achieve mastery. All four skills are equally weighted at GCSE and the primary classroom is the ideal place to build confidence in speaking and listening, before moving onto reading and writing tasks.

Planning a long-term overview for MFL

Our Seven Steps to Planning document ([Seven Steps](#)) guides MFL leaders through the curriculum planning process starting with the consideration of the vision and aims for each school. With these clearly defined, the long-term overview can be drafted. The languages offered, the frequency and method of delivery of MFL are the first things to consider. Are languages being delivered by subject specialists e.g. PPA cover? Are class teachers, who may require more support responsible for teaching languages to their own children? How many language sessions do pupils have per week? All these aspects make each context unique and need to be carefully taken into account.

Many schools use ready-made language packages, which do contain some great resources and offer support for teachers who need it. However, it is worth bearing in mind that they are

usually content heavy, thus creating cognitive overload and limited time to retrieve knowledge and embed learning through practice. Carefully selecting and adapting the modules in the long-term plans is the first step to take. In order to help with this process, you can find a suggested primary MFL 4 long-term overview on Moodle ([Long term overview](#)). Establish the main topics, vocabulary and structures for each term before focusing on the medium-term plans for each group (our suggested plans are [here](#)). At this stage, the success criteria and assessment opportunities can be mapped out in more detail. The inclusion of regular, explicit phonics teaching should also be a key part of each medium-term plan. As well as the focus on the vocabulary, grammar and phonics, pupils need to be given the chance to “appreciate stories, songs, poems and rhymes in the chosen language” (DFE, 2013). Thus, this would be the perfect time to plan in those creative opportunities in advance. Events such as European Languages Day, Bastille Day or even the Olympic Games can inspire children to get involved and widen their cultural capital.

Language lessons in the primary classroom

Once the medium and long-term plans are in place, word mats (also known as sentence builders) are a type of knowledge organiser, which can serve as the foundation for each unit. Some editable word mats for French to accompany the medium-term plans are located [here](#). These word mats can be handed to pupils at the start of each unit and used to support speaking and writing in particular. This type of document not only helps teachers to focus on the key structures and vocabulary ensuring consistency, but also acts as reference for all pupils and a form of scaffolding which can gradually be removed. When considering support for SEND children in MFL, word mats can give them the confidence needed to construct sentences in speaking and writing.

Based on word mats, lessons should involve plenty of opportunities for speaking and listening activities. These could include games, surveys and pair work or mini whiteboard activities which are all perfect ways for pupils to actively embed the language. Many of these activities do not involve huge amounts of resources or planning, thankfully. Once the language has been practised, perhaps over a series of lessons, teachers can zoom in on explicit phonics and grammar points, which can also be practised communicatively.

As time goes on, the HIAS MFL team will be adding resources to the Moodle, so do keep checking [here](#).

Formative and summative assessment

With relatively limited curriculum time, requirements to assess and provide evidence may seem daunting. Nevertheless, formative assessment using mini-whiteboards or in class speaking activities is ongoing and can be tracked weekly on a simple spreadsheet. Why not assess paired speaking gradually, focusing on different group of pupils each week? An assessment book or folder of short listening, reading and writing activities can demonstrate progress over time and highlight areas for improvement. Simple “can do” statements are easy to create (these are included in our suggested medium-term plans) and could be highlighted or ticked following self or peer assessment. Ensure the assessment tasks cover all four skills over a period of time.

Next steps

As experienced MFL Heads of Department, the HIAS MFL advisory team are always here to support primary MFL leaders with the development of language teaching across Hampshire. Our Moodle resources are gradually being developed and will be updated regularly. In addition, we organise in person and virtual termly network meetings which allow primary MFL teachers discuss and share ideas. At these meetings, we also present the latest developments in MFL teaching and often invite external experts to speak on various areas of language teaching pedagogy. In addition, we are always willing to arrange school visits and can support and advise with planning and training in a single or series of visits at your request.

Please let us know your school contact details, so we can keep you up to date with our HIAS news. Do get in touch if you would like to talk about how we can support and keep a look out for our communications regarding future training opportunities.

HIAS MFL Team

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For further details on the full range of services available please contact us using the following email: htlcdev@hants.gov.uk

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