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# Employing a Foreign Language Assistant through the British Council

One of the great joys of language learning is having the opportunity to develop a high level of cultural awareness, awe and wonder by working directly with a native speaker.

In Hampshire, only a relatively small number of schools continue to employ a Foreign Language Assistant. In years gone by instances of this were more widespread. Nevertheless, the British Council language assistant scheme continues to thrive and offers an excellent opportunity for schools to enrich the work they do in MFL lessons.

One such school in Hampshire which does employ a language assistant is Fernhill School in Farnborough.

At Fernhill, either French or Spanish are taught in alternate intake years to every child, by two highly skilled and experienced MFL specialists. However, Fernhill is a small school and MFL is a small department and consequently opportunities to widen the MFL ‘offer’ are sometimes challenging to find, given the other demands on teachers’ time and the fact that some opportunities for overseas visits would be cost prohibitive for some children.

Consequently, from September 2021, Fernhill chose to employ a French language assistant, Candice Despretz, to work with Key Stage 3 and GCSE students to enhance their language and cultural learning experience.

Severine Mourey, Head of MFL at Fernhill School explains:

“Candice, who comes from Brittany and is currently completing her English Masters with the University of Quimper, joined the MFL department at Fernhill School in September. She works 16 hours a week and is such a fantastic source of support in and out of the classroom.

Candice interacts with our students in a whole-class setting, while also taking out small groups. When working out of the classroom, our students, especially boys, feel comfortable about expressing themselves. It is great to see our quieter students having a go and generally being more adventurous in French.

Candice is also a vital part of the exam preparation, helping our students to build confidence by working through past papers, and practising their spoken skills ahead of the oral exam at GSCE.

During lunchtime and after school, Candice offers extra-curricular clubs, which include cooking traditional French dishes, learning about Francophonie, watching French films or discovering new French artists. The clubs are well attended by a huge variety of students with varying levels of abilities.

I could not recommend highly enough the impact that having a FLA within the MFL department had on our students. Not only does Candice have an influential role on our students’ attainment but she has also increased their desire to learn languages and discover new cultures. She is a vital source of information on linguistic and cultural trends. She provides authenticity, motivation and up-to-date cultural context.”

Candice is extremely popular with students, who had this to say:

“ In French, I like working with Miss Despretz because we work in a small group and she breaks it up into parts and goes through each part at a time. I also like working in a small group because I am not shy to talk”.

*From C. in Year 8*

“ I like French club because we get to try new food and we get to learn about new things about France. Miss is nice and knows cool French singers like Soprano”.

*From S. in Year 8*

“ I find working with Miss Despretz very helpful, especially when we do speaking. It’s easier to speak in a small group and Miss has more time to give us feedback on our pronunciation”.

*From F. in Year 10*

I would strongly urge schools to consider discussing the opportunities that employing a language assistant can provide. The cost to the school is comparatively low, taken against the potential impact the assistant can have on increasing engagement, improving uptake at GCSE, enhancing students’ speaking and listening skills and, ultimately, having a potentially positive impact on outcomes.

The gross monthly salary for a language assistant is £914.05 per month for a standard 12 hours per week. Language assistants can work up to a maximum of 18 hours per week. The standard fixed hourly rate is £13.77 for additional hours beyond the standard 12-hour period.

The British Council offers short and long posts, running either from November 2022 to April 2023 or October 2022 to May 2023.

Further information on the scheme, including how it works, how to support the assistant during their time at the school, terms and conditions of employment, languages offered and a link to the application form can be found here.

[Employ a language assistant at your school, college or university | British Council](https://www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/employ-language-assistant)

In addition, Severine Mourey, Head of MFL at Fernhill School, is happy to talk to colleagues interested in discussing the programme further.

Mark Kingswood, MFL adviser and Severine Mourey, Head of MFL, Fernhill School, Farnborough

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