

TEACHER BRIEFINGS

Briefing 1/ Summer 2017

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THE MFL PEDAGOGY REVIEW

Background

The MFL Pedagogy Review was commissioned and published by TSC – the Teaching Schools Council www.tscouncil.org.uk

It starts from an enquiry finding:

‘... schools restricting their languages curriculum in recent years, and ... decisions were more often than not driven by small or falling pupil numbers. Without concerted action, languages in our schools are at risk, and may become confined to certain types of school and certain sections of the pupil population.’

It makes recommendations for teachers and schools, teacher trainers and Ofqual.

‘... all teachers need explicit knowledge of the structures and usage of the language they are teaching’

A short selection from the key messages:

The Review highlights the importance of planning for progression:

‘Intrinsic motivation, which comes from a sense of progress, cognitive challenge, growing knowledge and understanding, and achievement, is a prime factor for pupils when they are asked to exercise choice about subjects to be pursued.’

‘That sense of real progress is inextricably linked to the way in which the subject matter of the course is planned, sequenced and taught.’

The report puts the focus on vocabulary, phonics and grammar:

‘... all teachers need explicit knowledge of the structures and usage of the language they are teaching, and the ability to explain them clearly to their pupils.’

‘Schemes of work in the better-performing schools we have visited focus initially on embedding knowledge of the most frequently used words in a language (including verbs) and a strong knowledge of grammatical principles.’



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There is encouragement for joining things up across the school system: *'... it is important that language teaching gives them explicit language knowledge and strategies which can help them with future study of other languages.'*

'Secondary schools should know about the modern languages taught at their feeder primary schools. Wherever possible, they should support language learning in primary schools and plan to build on pupils' primary school language knowledge.'

Reference

<https://www.tscouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/MFL-Pedagogy-Review-Report-2.pdf>

ALL suggests these points for reflection / action with colleagues:

a) Consider the recommendations for schools and teachers (in Appendix) to determine your school's standing on these points, and whether your school's philosophy is in agreement.

Are there any constructive actions to be taken in your school?

b) Identify which recommendations are for school leaders and curriculum planners. Are there ways of highlighting these to relevant colleagues in your school?

c) The Review suggests:

'Teachers should develop a strong repertoire of techniques for teaching vocabulary and having pupils practice, reinforce and use it. This repertoire should be a subject of constant professional development and discussion. It should include explanation of the origins of words, and patterns within them, including shared roots, and patterns that are particular to individual languages.'

If this is helpful, are there ways of constructing this sort of professional development agenda at a local level within the Association for Language Learning?

d) The Review suggests:

'By the end of the first year (of secondary school) pupils should have good knowledge of one or two tense systems, a good range of agreements, and how to form negatives using the verbs they know.'

'By the end of the second year ... pupils should have extended their knowledge of agreement systems and be able to use two or three tense systems in regular and the most common irregular forms.'

How does this relate to your scheme of work? What are your views on this?

Points for presentation to your Senior Management Team

The TSC MFL Pedagogy Review identifies these critical points for development of successful language teaching.

How far does your institution already support your languages team in these matters? What else could be done?

1. Time and opportunity for liaison and sharing. There is encouragement for joining things up across the school system:

'... it is important that language teaching gives them explicit language knowledge and strategies which can help them with future study of other languages.'

'Secondary schools should know about the modern languages taught at their feeder primary schools. Wherever possible, they should support language learning in primary schools and plan to build on pupils' primary school language knowledge.'

2. Curriculum

We recommend two to (ideally) three hours per week of teaching time, spread over frequent lessons of between 40 – 60 minutes duration. A GCSE course should have at least 10% of curriculum time.

Where schools are grouping and setting, they should ensure that the needs of all pupils ... are fully met. ... it is particularly important to ensure that those capable of proceeding to A level are taught in ways that enable them to do so.

Whatever their level of achievement, the vast majority of young people should study a modern foreign language up to the age of 16 and take a GCSE in it.

NB There are detailed questions for Headteachers to consider on page 20 of the report:

<https://www.ts council.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/MFL-Pedagogy-Review-Report-2.pdf>



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Appendix:

Recommendations from the Review for schools and teachers (abbreviated – full text in the pdf - link above):

1. Whatever their level of achievement, the vast majority of young people should study a modern foreign language up to the age of 16 and take a GCSE in it.
2. Pupils need to gain systematic knowledge of the vocabulary, grammar, and sound and spelling systems (phonics) of their new language ... They need to reinforce this knowledge with extensive planned practice ...
3. The content taught through the new language should be stimulating and widen pupils' knowledge of ... culture, history and literature ... without compromising the necessary sequencing of vocabulary and grammar.
4. Teachers should select textbooks on the basis of how well they support a planned approach to teaching vocabulary, grammar and phonics. They should be supplemented by additional, attractive resources, including ICT and reading resources.
5. Pupils should be taught to pay attention to the detail of meaning through translation, and should extend the range of their vocabulary ... through ... short texts and literature. They should have opportunities to interact with native speakers, both in person and through video links.
6. Languages teachers should know and build on the grammar taught in the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum for English.

7. Secondary schools should know about the modern languages taught at their feeder primary schools. Wherever possible, they should support language learning in primary schools and plan to build on pupils' primary school language knowledge.
8. Teachers should carefully plan their own and pupils' use of the new language ... and ensure that meanings are always clear and confusion avoided.
9. ... Teachers should use errors to inform teaching, helping pupils to pay attention to detail without discouraging them.
10. ... speaking, writing, listening and reading should be taught together, rather than as separate skills.
11. We recommend two to (ideally) three hours per week of teaching time, spread over frequent lessons of between 40 – 60 minutes duration. A GCSE course should have at least 10% of curriculum time.
12. Where schools are grouping and setting, they should ensure that the needs of all pupils ... are fully met. ... it is particularly important to ensure that those capable of proceeding to A level are taught in ways that enable them to do so.
13. Assessment should use a range of tasks, including those focused on specific aspects of the language taught, such as vocabulary or grammar. Some tasks should require pupils to compose sentences, short pieces of writing and oral presentations of their own. Assessment should not make excessive demands on teachers' time.