



# **Ensemble Languages Project – Transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 in Languages**

## **Contents**

- **Introduction**
- **Underpinning principles**
- **Case studies**
- **Impact**
- **Outcomes and outputs**
- **Evaluation and impact**
- **Future plans**
- **Recommendations**

## Introduction

One of the key proposals of the original Ensemble bid was to focus in detail on progression in languages from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 and more specifically from year 5 to year 8

*“The focus of our activities will be on primary provision and transition from KS2 to KS3. Primary schools are at various stages in the development of their languages provision. This range of provision from September 2015 will prove challenging for KS3 teachers to build on when pupils may have a wide range of language learning experiences.”*

Whilst this has always been the case the key difference when we submitted the bid was that from September 2014 primary languages were to be a statutory part of the primary curriculum. This brought new challenges for primary and secondary teachers. Once a subject is statutory then the emphasis was likely to move to assessment however informal this may be for pupils. This indicated that there would also be a pressing need for teachers to recognise, track and mark progression within KS2 and from KS2 – KS3.

A number of schools working within this consortium had been aware of these demands for some time and were in a position to support schools who were not at that time teaching languages as a full part of their KS2 curriculum and who were still unsure of how they planned for, ensured and assessed pupil progression within Key Stage 2 and into Key Stage 3.

Three TSAs within the wider Ensemble Alliance focused on Transition and Progression as one of their “specialist” areas for development. This was of particular interest to them when analysing results from the **cross phase needs analysis**<sup>1</sup> that they carried out with the secondary and primary schools within their cluster of schools. This information proved an excellent starting point in determining the approaches they would take and the training models that would be most effective in order to determine the best way to create a realistic and appropriate timeline to work with teachers and allow them to trial approaches and resources within and across key stages 2 and 3. Those involved were conscious from their findings that schools were at different starting points and that it would be unhelpful to try and create a “one size fits” all model.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of feedback from the needs identification it was decided to start the work on Transition in the second half of the spring term and early summer. It

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<sup>1</sup> - Needs analysis form

<sup>2</sup> - Detailed analysis form

was agreed that to focus on Transition and Progression too soon would run the risk of diverting time and attention away from the tenets of good languages teaching and from other key aspects of the Bid such as ...

French, German and Spanish are all taught within the consortium

## **Underpinning principles**

### **Key areas to address**

***In primary schools*** relatively few teachers have the linguistic background to teach the grammar and phonology of a second language, but they do have a clear understanding of how to teach literacy. They commonly expect children to understand and apply rules. They are experts at making texts accessible to children from all abilities, and in modelling writing. These are valuable skills that should be transferred to KS3 L2 classrooms

We were conscious that primary teachers might not know how to assess progress in a second language. This is often because they may not recognise small learning events, which may appear trivial, when, in fact, they point to internalisation and retrieval of vocabulary or grammar. So it was vital that training addressed these challenges and that guidance on assessment combined rigour with flexibility. We wanted to induct teachers new to this area to look at what learners can do rather than what they can't.

**In secondary schools:** secondary MFL teachers are largely specialist linguists able to teach one or two foreign languages to a high level. They have the subject knowledge and expertise to teach well and to use a range of techniques, strategies and resources rooted in an effective pedagogy. They rarely have the in depth understanding of how younger children learn and use language. This can put them in the difficult position of wanting to support primary languages and wanting to build on learners' prior knowledge and learning but not quite knowing ***from first hand experience*** how to do this in the most effective ways possible.

As a result of the needs analysis activity with schools and teachers to identify transition issues all 3 Alliances knew that it was essential to start work on:

- Developing new, more creative transition schemes of work across Years KS2 and KS3 and move away from Key Stage "splendid isolation."
- It was essential that new Schemes of Work and accompanying new resources should be rooted in a mutual understanding by all involved of the key aspects of generic primary pedagogy subject specific MFL secondary pedagogy.

One of the key concerns that we had as an alliance was that transition from KS2 to KS 3 can in itself become an "industry" and that it is easy to overlook that fact that transition is in essence about 2 areas:

1. Ensuring linguistic progress and progression from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3
2. Ensuring that teaching and learning matches the growing cognitive and conceptual abilities of pupils.

It is a danger that pupils at secondary school go backwards in their learning by being presented with materials and teaching that fails to recognise their prior learning and/or fails to challenge them with sufficiently sophisticated resources and learning challenges. For example much of the learning can easily slip back into the pattern of over focusing on nouns rather than a quick move to using sentence and text and a tendency to use materials/resources that the pupils themselves identify as “babyish.” This is not about apportioning blame to either primary or secondary colleagues but is rather about making the point that in order to understand each other’s pedagogies and challenges and getting it right for the developing needs of pupils the start of excellent transition lies firmly in mutual observation of teaching and learning, focussed discussions and developing cross phase schemes of work and teaching and learning strategies that will meet the changing needs of pupils.

Our twin focuses were therefore:

1. To identify the changing needs of pupils
2. To induct primary and secondary teachers in working together to prove seamless linguistic and conceptual progression across years 6, 7 and ideally 8.

The underpinning principles of the work were:

- That it should be led by schools with support from subject experts where appropriate
- That primary and secondary teachers would work collaboratively at all times
- That we would develop a replicable and sustainable training model
- That we would draw on research that had been tried and tested in other curriculum areas
- That the work would be based around a set of key questions

We wanted to make sure that the work on transition was an integral part of all the other areas that we were working on and that it was closely interwoven with the Let’s Enjoy training modules and to our work on assessment and progression. We need teachers to see the overlaps and common principle that exist between these areas so that they as well as pupils develop transferable skills and become skilled in using resources, teaching strategies and assessment techniques to deliver an integrated programme across primary and secondary MFL teaching.

We agreed that the training and discussions would need to lay down a blueprint for future work in this area in terms of primary and secondary teachers’ ability to match underpinning principles of sustained learning in MFL to classroom planning and practice. We wanted to ensure that planning and

practice would be rooted in thinking, research and pedagogy and not solely based around classroom activities. This then liberates teachers to use a range of recyclable activities with which they and pupils feel comfortable as long as they are adapted to appropriate linguistic and conceptual levels. This is particularly important for non-specialist MFL teachers in developing their own confidence in the language and in how to teach the language.

### Key questions

- What are the best ways for schools to collaborate? How can primary and secondary colleagues best work together?
- Transfer and transition – are they the same, are they different, where do they converge?
- How is revisiting different from repeating or repairing?
- Does changing languages at the end of Key Stage 2 have a profound impact on learning and progression for pupils and on planning and teaching for both primary and secondary teachers?
- How do we build a class “ethos” of language learning to provide a secure and affirming learning environment for pupils who do not know each other or their teacher?
- How is curriculum planning at local level most successful and effective?
- How can primary and secondary schools work collegiately to devise models of transfer and transition in languages that will allow for choice and diversification of provision?
- If we were to omit the word transition from our work what would we identify as the key elements of linguistic progression and what impact would this have on primary and secondary teaching and learning?

In order to initiate discussion and reflection we also drew on the work done by the London Challenge Transition Project.<sup>3</sup> Although this work had been in the public domain for a number of years we all agreed that it would be new to many participants in the Ensemble project and that it would form an extremely important and focussed starting point for our discussions. Particularly in allowing us to explore the difference between “transfer” and “transition.”

### Transition Bridges

1. **Administrative bridge** – sharing information about pupils, good working relationships between primary and secondary schools, feedback to primary schools of year 7 progress
2. **Social and Personal bridge** – induction days, open evenings, pupil peer mentoring, pupil and parents guides

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<sup>3</sup> London Challenge The **London Challenge** was a school improvement programme launched by the UK's Labour Government in 2003. The policy document "Transforming **London** Secondary Schools" set out the aims of the programme, which was designed to create a "step change" in the performance of **London** secondary schools.

3. **Curriculum bridge** – effective use of pupil data, cross-phase projects, exchange of curriculum maps, joint planning
4. **Pedagogical bridge** – shared understanding of effective teaching and learning, team teaching, teacher exchanges
5. **Management of Learning bridge** – pupils are active participants

## Case studies

### All Hallows Catholic College Macclesfield

This piece of work was focussed on one key research question:

*What can we learn from the other phase to impact positively on our practice and transition?*

Both primary and secondary teachers were asked to focus on 3 distinct areas.

1. Observations:
2. Impact on teaching moving forward.
3. Points to consider for secondary school

The full case studies can be found on the Ensemble Languages website [www.ensemble-mfl.co.uk](http://www.ensemble-mfl.co.uk)

Another end product of the work in this Alliance is a high quality document that can be used for information transfer between primary and secondary schools as evidence of the language covered across all years in Key Stage 2, how much time is allocated to this and whether a specialist or non- specialist has taught the language. Primary teachers stressed that this is a quick and straightforward way of record keeping. Secondary colleagues described this as just the type of information that would change their perceptions, planning and expectations.<sup>4</sup>

### Thomas Estley (TELA) and Rushey Mead (LeTS) Alliances

Transition training was put in place at both TSAs including some face to face CPD followed by a training trainers' programme with lead teachers working with an Ensemble Group Expert.

Given the desire to use finances and human resources effectively within the timescale available senior leaders and teachers in the TELA and LeTS decided that the most efficient way to identify training and teaching needs was as follows:

A Senior Leader and Head of MFL had early discussions with an Ensemble Group Expert. These focussed on the best ways of gathering information to inform subsequent CPD and teaching and learning.

The Ensemble Group Expert then provided the Alliances with a set of questions to stimulate thinking and discussions and with a range of resources that would support new practise

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<sup>4</sup> - Year 6 to Year 7 – Languages Transition

Teachers in the Alliance who had chosen to focus on this area of work then had time to consider these questions and materials so that they could identify exactly their CPD needs. They agreed that the training model would be most effective if done by a training trainers approach so that a few teachers would themselves become “experts” in this area and would then be able to stimulate thinking, discussions and training for colleagues across the Alliance.

The TELA training day was held on 09/11/2015 and the RM training on 27/01/2016

It was of prime importance the training was not just about activities and resources and was not focussed solely on year 6. Those involved very much wanted to analyse what is meant by linguistic progression and as this is about progression and age appropriate tasks and challenges.

The core groups worked through the key questions as outlined earlier looking at, sharing and developing ideas that would lead to using some well-established resources and strategies in new ways. In the light of discussions and training activities the training focused on exploiting age appropriate materials that would encourage pupils to accelerate reading and speaking skills with a greater emphasis on scaffolding and using key points of grammar that hitherto may have been considered to be challenging for the primary and Year 7 curriculum.

The emphasis was on getting teachers to look in depth at what we mean by progression in MFL. This included raising expectations and standards for both teachers and pupils.

Subsequent work was done by pupils to embed linguistic progression throughout Key Stage 2 and to reinforce the point that transition and being ready for secondary language learning is not simply a Year 6 issue.

*"Enjoyed the practical tips and ideas for the classroom"*

### **Outcomes and outputs**

All research, reading, and materials produced by the three TSAs involved in this work are available on the Ensemble Languages website. They are being widely shared and trialled across the Ensemble consortium. They can be used free of charge by any school or group of schools beyond the consortium. They tell a story that is replicable and sustainable with solid foundations on which to build.

### **Evaluation and impact**

At this stage evaluation is qualitative rather than quantitative. Teachers and most importantly senior leaders involved believe that the model of working together and sharing their research, thinking, training and materials has made them into a powerful and cohesive group within their regions and nationally. They are of the opinion that an understanding of progression in language teaching and learning is the thread that will unite primary and secondary MFL teachers in their ability to ensure that Transition becomes a

process in which pupils move forward in their learning. There are many references to this throughout the individual case studies and appendices. Almost all refer to the fact that when primary and secondary teachers work together the impact on expectations of what pupils know and can do across key stages rises substantially. If transition is built around high expectations and support networks are in place, as described in the case studies, this will reduce the likelihood of pupils regressing in their learning and skills from Year 6 to Year 7. Both primary and secondary teachers will be more confident in planning for progression, recognizing progression and asking the right questions of each other to gather, analyse, pass on receive and work with straightforward data and information on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding.

More teachers within the Alliance are now more confident in their ability to organise in school or intra Alliance CPD and training for colleagues. This "training the trainers" approach will allow schools to meet the needs of changing cohorts of teachers and to fashion the training for specific purposes.

#### **Impact statements from the All Hallows Alliance**

*"Firstly, this has reminded me never to underestimate the abilities and knowledge of Primary pupils, when they arrive in my Secondary classroom! It has also given me more evidence that a great deal of effective teaching can take place with Primary age pupils, and I am keen to support my Primary Feeder colleagues in this delivery. Furthermore, we in secondary schools must plan for the pupils' progression of learning. "*

*"More focus on stretching the children in to using full sentences and embedding the language in writing and speaking, rather than vocabulary learning; drawing upon what has already been covered in Primary school. An understanding that in some schools children are writing simple sentences as young as year 2 and how the school will adapt to accelerate the learning of children coming into Y7 each year."*

#### **Impact statements from TELA and LeTS**

*"There are varied levels of linguistic competence throughout the staff. The Y3 teacher is in her 3<sup>rd</sup> year of teaching and the year 4 teacher is in her second year of teaching and both have GCSE in language and are keen to use their skills to encourage 'pupils to have a go.' The Y 5 teacher is an LSA who is a bilingual German/English speaker and a competent linguist. The MFL lead teaches Y6 and has a languages degree. The Ensemble project has given them all the extra confidence to stand up and deliver the lessons."*

*"1 Everyone is now on board and engaged with the teaching of language and it happens on a regular basis.*

*2 Other members of staff are happy to attend the training*

*3 Pupils enjoy language learning and are very keen to participate fully in lessons."*



*"Great activities to trial"*

*"Interested in the aspect of transition bridges"*

*" Made me think about what I can do to improve our school's transition process, and the difference between transfer and transition"*

### **Future plans**

Even without continued funding senior leaders and primary and secondary teachers involved in this work express a strong desire and some concrete plans to continue working together for the foreseeable future.

They have found the work on progression from Year 6 to Years 7 and 8 so valuable that they want to see it rolled out more widely and embedded from April 2016 onwards.

### **Their key focuses will now be on the following:**

1. How will schools think differently?
2. What will schools do differently?

### **Recommendations**

Schools involved in this work are extremely grateful for the DfE funding that allowed this work to happen. It has allowed them to build networks, to work together and to implement and evaluate approaches and materials. They are conscious that it is all too easy for good work to get lost if there is not national point of dissemination. The Ensemble Alliance is pursuing a number of ways of making language teachers and others aware of this work. These include the subject association, ALL, NCTL and their own TSA websites. Staff changeover in MFL departments and in both primary and secondary schools can be rapid. It is essential that this work remains dynamic and does not become set in stone.

The major concern is that when funding finishes it will be more difficult for this work to continue or for new alliances nationally to replicate and develop what has been done here.



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