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Modern Languages in the Primary School (MLPS): Some Key Messages

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Gracias y Enhorabuena

- Observation in 150 classes
- 974 pupil questionnaires
- 48 teacher interviews
- MLPS teachers have reached a good level of linguistic competence
- MLPS teachers have a good understanding of pedagogy
- MLPS teachers have provided a positive learning experience for their pupils
- What are the key messages ?

What do P6 pupils think overall ?

- Primary 6 (aged 9 -10) (n = 468).
- Primary 7 (aged 10-11) (n = 506).
- Attitudinal survey (4 point Likert scale).
- 66% of boys and 81.7% of girls quite liked or liked learning a language a lot.
- A Mann-Whitney U test (U = 20373.0, p = 0.000) showed that girls (mean =3.23) were significantly more positive than boys (2.80).

What do P6 pupils think

- “I like learning French because it’s fun and learning songs and games can be really exciting.”
- “I think learning French is fun because we play games and sing songs.”
- “French has to be my favourite subject. In the house I always read books about it. I can’t get enough of it.”
- “I am enjoying learning French because of the way it is taught.”

What do the P6 pupils think

- “If you go to France you will know the language they speak.”
- “I think learning French is a very good experience because if anyone of us meet a French person then we will be able to speak to them.”
- “French is good because if you go to France you can talk to people.”
- “I like speaking in French because I have always wanted to learn a language any language. And I think it will be useful in France or a different country who speak French.”
- “I think speaking French is great because I have relatives in France and I go there a lot so I can

What do the P7 pupils think

- 56.7% of P7 boys either quite liked or liked learning a language a lot.
- 66.2% of P7 girls were positive about this experience.
- A Mann–Whitney U test ($U=27501.5$, $p=0.008$) showed that girls (mean = 2.89) were significantly more positive than boys (mean = 2.66).
- 10.5% of boys and 15.5% of girls

What do the P7 pupils think

- “I love learning French because I love to learn foreign languages.”
- “I like French because it gets you out of doing work.”
- “I think learning French will be helpful to us, because a lot of us go to France, and then we can communicate in and make friends.”
- “I think French in primary school is good because it prepares us for High School.”
- “French is very good as it can help you in jobs when you need to have foreign languages.”
- “It’s great. You may need it on holiday or if you get a job there.”
- “I think learning French is good because most countrys in Europe learn English and we should learn another countrys language.”
- “It’s fun and I like it because it’s like going back to P1 but

Perception of Difficulty

- “It is sometimes hard to understand French people because they have a different accent.”
- “Reading is hard because they spell and pronounce different.”
- “It is quite hard because you sometimes have to put in accents.”
- “Some French words have silent letters so they are quite hard how to read.”
- “I think speaking is quite hard because you do not know how to pronounce it.”
- “I think listening to French is hard because people speak in French so fast that it is hard to understand.”

Reasons for learning a

- i. Family and Friends
- “Because my Auntie is Dutch and I would like to speak to her like that.”
- “Because my best friend comes from Iraq.”
- “I would like to learn Italian because my brother knows it and it’s funny.”
- “Because my family are Italian.”
- “Because my auntie and cousins moved to France.”
- “All my cousins speak German so I could talk with them secretly.”
- “I would like to learn Gaelic because lots of my family know it and I usually go to Ireland for my holidays.”
- ii. Holidays
- “I always mostly go there for my holidays and girls come up to me talking Spanish and I would like to speak back to them.”
- “I often go to Spain or Spanish islands for my holiday.”
- “I mainly go to Spain and would be able to speak to people.”
- iii. Future
- “Because when I am older I want to go and stay in Germany.”
- “When I am older I am going to France.”

What do the P6 pupils think of Speaking?

Boys (n = 259)

Girls

(n = 209)

- | | | |
|---|-------|-------|
| • Answering the teacher's questions | 45.6% | 61.7% |
| • Speaking with a partner | 69.5% | 77.9% |
| • Speaking when you play a game | 79.1% | 79.1% |
| • Repeating as a whole class | 53.1% | 68.3% |
| • Repeating something by yourself | 37.1% | 38.3% |
| • Singing songs | 60.4% | 81.8% |
| • "When I speak on my own I just go blank." | | |
| • "When we have to say French I think oh no." | | |
| • "I think it is embarrassing having to speak in front of the class." | | |
| • "I don't particularly like speaking because I am a bit shy and I just don't like it." | | |

What do the P6 pupils think of Listening?

- “I think that when you are listening to play games you learn more because you are having fun.”
- “I like playing a lot of French games because they help me a lot with my French.”
- “I don’t like listening in French because I get mickst up. I only like it when it is a game.”
- “Listening is a good way to learn but is

What do the P6 pupils think of Reading ?

- “It’s nice to see the words in French that way you know how to spell them.”
- “to see the spelling written down sometimes helps with learning how to pronounce the words.”
- “I think it is good because it helps you to spell French words.”
- “Hard because they spell and pronounce different; some French words have silent letters so they are quite hard to read: sometimes reading is hard because the word written down looks much different from the way you say it.”

What do the P6 pupils think of

- “I enjoy writing because all the words are spelt different than they sound.”
- “Writing is fun because there are all these different marks you have to learn.”
- “I like writing because it is fun and you get a stamper with a star on it.”
- “I like writing because it helps me with spelling and reminds me of questions and answers.”
- “I think writing is the best part of French because it helps you learn and spell the words in French.”
- “I think writing French makes me more independent about writing a sentence in French.”
- “Writing in French is very hard to write as you have to remember all these ‘apostrophes’ and ‘accents’.”
- “All the spellings are funny so it is quite hard to write words in French.”

Key messages from

- The Variation in Aims
- The Variation in Time
- All 4 Skill Areas
- Over anxious to assess speaking
- Variation on sounds
- Variation re error tolerance
- Variation re Knowledge about Language
- Variation re Coping Strategies
- Variation re Extending Language
- MLPS – a special case ?
- Continuity to Secondary