

Languages at the heart of the curriculum: Saint Austin's Primary School

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Brief description

Teaching Spanish through an approach based on content and language integrated learning (CLIL) is firmly established at St Austin's Primary School. Links with Spain and its culture provide rich opportunities to develop the pupils' understanding and appreciation of other cultures. Modern language learning is for all pupils; disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make especially good progress. This is one of four examples comprising two primary and two secondary schools, where pupils make rapid progress in learning modern languages.

Overview – the school's message



'At St Austin's we believe that learning a foreign language provides a valuably rich educational, cultural and social experience. As a centre of excellence for Spanish we strive for excellence and enjoyment which permeates through all we do in the teaching and learning of this vibrant language and culture.

At the heart of our school community and ethos is our mission statement: *"En nuestro colegio todos somos especiales, amaremos y serviremos como Jesús nos enseñó"* ("In our

school, where everyone is special, we will love and serve as Jesus taught.")

We believe in providing a medium for cross-curricular links and for the reinforcement of language skills and understanding, developed in other subjects. Our aim to develop a love of language learning is evident in the enthusiasm and engagement of our children.

Our children are future global citizens and we work to nurture their international-mindedness. Through their study and celebration of Hispanic cultures we aim to enhance our children's awareness of the multilingual, multicultural world. They grow with an understanding and appreciation of similarities and differences between global societies.

Governors, staff, parents and pupils are all united in the support of language learning and through this we believe we truly fulfil the aims of our mission statement promoting both the Christian and international ethos of our school.'

Noel O'Neill and John Carney, headship team

The good practice in detail

From the Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 6, every child is given the opportunity to develop their linguistic competencies and gain an understanding of how language works, thereby developing their communication and literacy skills. By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6, the large majority of them have achieved at least a level 3 in the Asset language skills gradings in reading, writing and listening. At least half achieved level 3 in speaking. Feedback from one local feeder secondary school confirms that pupils from St Austin's are always well ahead of their peers from other primary schools when they start



Spanish in Year 7. The school won the European Award for Languages in 2008 for its innovative work with information and communication technology.

All pupils at the school experience Spanish. This includes Reception, where pupils have five or 10 minutes of incidental conversation and songs at the start of each school day

in addition to a weekly lesson. From Year 1 onwards, pupils have two lessons of Spanish a week and, in addition, in Years 3 to 6 a mathematics lesson is taught through the medium of Spanish. Some science lessons are also taught through the language.

Teaching methods for success

The school has a highly specialised languages team. The subject leader has a degree and teaching qualification in modern languages. The CLIL project which has been developed with the Spanish Ministry of Education, involves a native Spanish teacher delivering part of the mathematics curriculum through the medium of Spanish. The school also pays for a bilingual foreign language assistant provided by the local authority who teaches Spanish in Key Stages 1 and 2. All other teachers on the staff have varying levels of Spanish from beginner to advanced, so that all are able as a minimum to conduct incidental Spanish sessions. Class teachers 'sit in' when specialist Spanish teachers take language lessons, so that they can develop their own subject knowledge and teaching skills.

There are extensive opportunities for training. If teachers show commitment to the subject, the school will fund courses for them. One teacher was funded to study Spanish on a nine-month intensive course and returned 'fully fluent'. One class teacher took a Master's degree focussing on Teaching Spanish at a Primary Level. In addition to mathematics, there are extensive cross-curricular links with other subjects, such as a Year 2 design and technology project based on buildings in Valencia and a Year 5 geography topic on Spanish cities and Cuba.

A wealth of extra-curricular activities includes a Year 6 business and enterprise scheme selling Spanish mugs, tea towels and tapas recipes and two choirs performing songs in Spanish. Every year a Hispanic week is held which includes workshops in dance, food, songs and performances, which highlight the progression in pupil competence in Spanish. Local university students and local secondary school students including former pupils teach younger pupils in workshops during the week. Pupils particularly enjoy dressing up in Spanish clothes, sampling Spanish food and taking part in dance workshops. They learn about the culture of other Spanish speaking countries, including Columbia and Argentina. Pupils have an extensive knowledge of the wider Spanish-speaking world.



The strength of teaching in language lessons is the teachers' subject knowledge and pronunciation. Listening skills in particular are developed well by the use of target language throughout the lesson. Teachers are effective in asking questions in Spanish. The language level is challenging and demanding, so that pupils develop a high level of understanding. Pupils also have the opportunity to develop reading and writing. Lessons are fun and enjoyable for pupils and teachers and characterised by songs, rhymes, actions and games and the use of technology. All marking in pupils' books is completed in Spanish.

Positive outcomes

Attitudes to learning are highly positive. Pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy their Spanish, whether in Reception or Year 6. They appreciate the range of topics they experience with opportunities built in to revisit topics. Pupils choose to continue with Spanish when they join secondary school. Some have started French in Year 8. All want to carry on to GCSE in Spanish as an option because it will be 'very useful' in their future careers. Whatever career pathway they are planning, they anticipate using Spanish in the future.

There is a very high level of commitment from the Headship Team of two headteachers, both of whom have learnt Spanish. The status of the languages subject leader is on a par with literacy and numeracy. There is a strong commitment to inclusion. No pupil is

withdrawn from Spanish lessons. The Governing Body was fully involved in the decision to start the CLIL project ten years ago. Spanish remains a standing item on the agenda of all Governing Body meetings. The school has a strong language [policy](#).

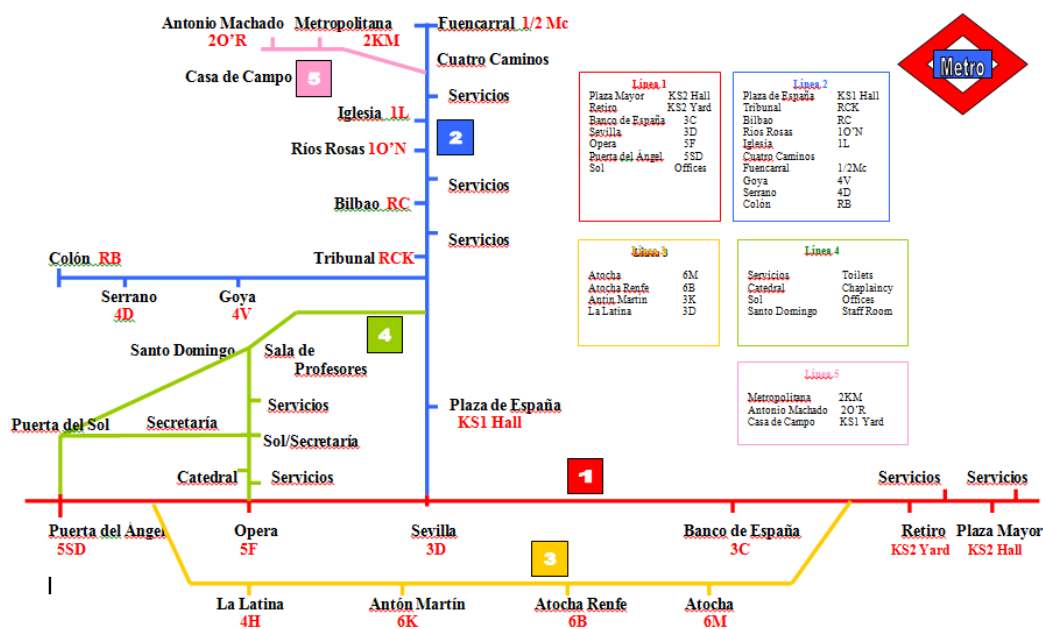
The project does not rely on one key individual. There are many on the staff who can deliver Spanish. All advertisements for new members of staff state knowledge of Spanish as a desirable feature.



There are strong partnerships with the Spanish Embassy, a partner school in Spain (San Jacinto, Seville), the local authority and a provider of initial teacher education (Liverpool Hope University). Every year, trainee teachers who specialise in primary modern foreign languages are placed at the school.

Initially the local authority provided St Austin's with three days a week of an advisory teacher to kick-start the project. This was phased out as the school took on more of the responsibility for languages teaching themselves. From the start, the school was committed to a sustainable model that would not be reliant on external support.

The map of the school is based on a Spanish metro line map:



The school has invested heavily in technology, including portable media players, tablet computers and applications to develop Spanish. The ethos and environment of the school is immersed in Spanish. Signs and displays are in Spanish. Clocks in reception tell the time in

various Spanish speaking countries. The school's mission statement is in Spanish. The website and indeed the whole school fully reflects the theme of 'All things Spanish'!

The school's background



St Austin's Catholic Primary School is a larger than average school situated in a suburban area of Liverpool. The school serves a mixed socio economic area with the deprivation indicator being in line with national averages.

The school has previously won the 'UK Spanish School of the Year' award and won an award for European languages.

Other examples published in this set

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Dallam School
Springfield Lower School

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