

# Why teach Japanese in primary schools?



This booklet contains information about the practicalities and benefits of teaching Japanese in primary schools. All information has been provided by the schools named below and compiled by the Japan Foundation London. You can also find further detailed case studies on the Japan Foundation website:

[www.jpff.org.uk/language/listofschoools.php#case1](http://www.jpff.org.uk/language/listofschoools.php#case1)

- Barnston Primary School
- Carden Primary School
- Christ Church (Erith) C of E Primary School
- Fleckney C of E Primary School
- Prince Rock Primary School
- St Edmund Campion Catholic Primary School
- Yealmpstone Farm Primary School

## Japanese at Barnston Primary

*Jill Pearson, Headteacher*



### Background:

Barnston primary has a long history of teaching languages – the previous Headteacher had a degree in French and Spanish and introduced languages across Key Stage 2. She travelled a great deal to see schools in other cultures and set up a link with Japan. On taking over the

headship eight years ago, I continued her legacy and introduced weekly language lessons in Key Stage 1 initially and eventually in F2. This was then further enhanced by language clubs in Spanish and French. Two years ago, the Senior Leadership Team and governors decided that it would be good for our children to experience languages beyond the European arena and looked into Mandarin and Japanese. On researching our local area and bordering authorities, it seemed that Japanese was becoming more popular in high schools and we wanted our pupils to be able to continue what we had started with them, therefore Japanese was chosen. It was also difficult to get a Mandarin teacher and resources, whereas on asking our wider community, we found a parent who taught Japanese and who directed us to the Japan Foundation and their resources.

### **Rationale:**

As a school with many international links through our International Schools Award, we feel that our pupils should be given every opportunity to not only learn other languages but experience other cultures. Our school mission statement is 'Life Learning in a Fruitful Environment' and it is the learning for life that inspired us to seek out Japanese culture.

### **Partnerships:**

We have had lengthy partnerships with schools in Thailand and India as well as brief partnerships in Japan – sharing work, e-mailing and sharing cultural experiences. In addition, we have a partner school in Cumbria who also has introduced Japanese into their school culture. This enables us to share our good practice with each other and for the children to visit and talk to each other in Japanese. Last October I visited Japan through the Japan Foundation and many links were set up as a result of that visit.

### **Staffing:**

We have two part time MFL teachers in school who teach Spanish and French and one full time teacher who teaches Spanish only. Last year we took on a Japanese teacher to teach after school clubs. This started with Key Stage 1 but after much press and success, many parents from Key Stage 2 asked if it could be made available to them. Our parents seem very keen to see Japanese become a permanent language opportunity and are willing to pay for the lessons – the resources available from the Japan Foundation also mean that the teachers are able to continue and extend from the Japanese lessons.

### **Curriculum:**

In September 2015 we introduced Japanese into school for the first time just for Key Stage 1. It then extended to Key Stage 2 and we hope to see it flourish as a part of the weekly school curriculum. As a 21<sup>st</sup> century school we are passionate about providing our pupils with a world view on education, languages and culture and to use modern technologies to access other cultures and their 'mother tongue'.

### **Outcomes:**

1. The parents throughout our school community have embraced Japanese and it is a language and culture that our pupils are greatly enjoying.
2. International links have been increased and these provide fantastic opportunities for our pupils to be citizens of the future, with an international view of the world and a grasp of languages that will take them beyond Europe in their life skills.
3. In a recent Ofsted (19<sup>th</sup> April 2016), the HMI loved the fact that the school was encouraging more language opportunities and not just teaching the statutory requirement. It was commented on that we were preparing our pupils well for the future by using cultural experiences and languages such as Japanese.
4. An important aspect of our school development is mindfulness activities and through linking this with Japan and Japanese culture. We have adapted our lunch time practice to reflect mindfulness, based on the Japanese culture experienced in the schools in Japan during a visit.

## Japanese at Carden Primary School:

*Helen Longton-Howorth, Head Teacher*



### Background:

Having returned from a visit to Japan in October 2015, which included visits to several schools, Helen Longton-Howorth, Head Teacher of Carden Primary School introduced the teaching and sharing of Japanese language, culture, arts and traditions to the children. Initially launching as a 'Working With Others' event, children in Key Stage 2 now receive fortnightly Japanese language instruction. The children are able to join the lunchtime Japanese club as well.

### Rationale:

The purpose of introducing Japanese in to the curriculum at Carden was twofold: To introduce and develop the teaching and learning of a non-European language to compliment the established French provision, and to develop global links/partnerships with schools/children in another part of the world so that communication and a relationship could be established.

### Partnerships:

The school has worked in conjunction with the Japan Foundation. The head teacher has also established and developed good working partnerships and links with the colleagues

from other UK schools who participated in the visit to Japan. Other local schools were invited to come along and join in a further 'Working With Others' Day which took place in late June 2016.

### **Staffing:**

The school employs one part-time native Japanese teacher. Additionally, they benefitted from a Japanese intern during the summer term 2016. Class teachers are required to work alongside the specialist teacher to develop their own knowledge and understanding of teaching Japanese language, cultures and traditions.

### **Curriculum:**

Japanese is taught through a variety of songs, visual resources, art and other practical activities. Good use is made of the online materials available through the Japan Foundation website.

## **Japanese at Christ Church (Erith) C of E Primary School**

*Mr Matthew E Harris - Assistant Principal*



### **Background:**

Christ Church (Erith) C of E Primary School collaborated with other local primaries to design and launch the Creative Learning Journey, a method of teaching in primary schools which promotes a key theme or topic through a 'wheel' made up of 7 areas of learning. These are based on the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework, and include the teaching and learning of communication, language and literature. Pupils follow a 'wheel' for various amounts of time, from a one-day 'wee wheel', whole school weeks, to eight week long wheels. We also include a "free-wheeling" week for pupils to design their own wheel for the week and follow their own individual plan of study. As part of this, the teaching of foreign languages becomes an intrinsic part of any wheel.

### **Rationale:**

Through research into local secondary schools and the foreign languages they offer, there is a wide variety of languages (including Latin, Chinese, Ancient Greek, French, Spanish and Russian!) – one primary school cannot cover all of them! Instead, our rationale is to teach

pupils the *skills* needed to learn a foreign language: the concept of translating objects into a foreign language, and that phrases or expressions may have multiple translations and vice versa. By doing this, we believe we will better prepare our pupils for secondary school, regardless of the specific language they study.

### **Partnerships:**

Christ Church (Erith) C of E Primary School is part of the Trinitas Academy Trust, which includes Trinity C of E Secondary School in Belvedere, along with St Augustine of Canterbury Primary School in Belvedere. We are also working closely with Slade Green Primary School.

### **Staffing:**

We have been successful in our application to the Japan Foundation for help with funding to provide a Japanese language teacher, who will team-teach pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 (with their class teachers as part of their ongoing CPD) not only the Japanese language, but also the approach to teaching used in Japan, as witnessed by our Principal on her visit to Japan in October 2015.

### **Curriculum:**

As outlined above, we follow the Creative Learning Journey and whilst Japanese language sessions will be timetabled for each class, the CLJ programme allows teachers to draw on all aspects of a wheel throughout a week / term.

## **Japanese learning at Fleckney C of E Primary School, Leicestershire**

*Tim Leah - Headteacher*



### **Background:**

Japanese learning was first introduced to Fleckney Primary School in 2010; this was in the form of a six week 'Japanese language and art' after-school club. The response from the children partaking in the club was over-whelming and thus a second club was set up to avoid turning children away. The club (at this point) was run by two school teachers, one of whom was very interested in Art and the second who was a former teacher on the JET (Japan Exchange and Teaching) Programme. It was during this year that a partnership with a Japanese School in Gunma Prefecture (Nanmoku Elementary and Junior High School) was set up. The school conducted a 'Japan Launch Day' to mark the beginning of this school

partnership – providing the children with the opportunity to experience a variety of activities, such as Taiko Drumming, kite making, mask making, calligraphy and ink painting, origami and a Japanese play about *Tanabata* (Japan’s star festival).

In 2013, the study of Japan was introduced into the Geography Curriculum (Year 5) encouraging the development of the partnership with Nanmoku-mura. During the study of this unit on Japan, children were introduced to the Japanese language. It became quite apparent that the children had a genuine interest in learning the language as well learning about the physical, social and human geography. At this stage the MFL co-ordinator wanted Japanese to be introduced into the MFL curriculum but needed to ascertain how this could be done most effectively.

In 2015, the Head Teacher, Tim Leah applied (and took part) in the Japan Foundation’s Japan Study Tour Programme for UK Primary Leaders. Another teacher in school took part in the Foundation’s two day language for beginner’s course and two teachers attended the Japan Conference for Schools. The interest in learning about Japan and the Japanese language was starting to ‘filter’ out to many sectors of the school community.

### **Curriculum**

Until 2014, French was the only language taught as part of the Key Stage 2 MFL curriculum at Fleckney. French teaching was only being taught in Key Stage 2 and upon discussions with the feeder secondary school, it was important that children were to continue with French as the main language offered.

However, it was felt that the MFL curriculum needed to broaden; it needed to provide children with further language learning opportunities – with the aim to inspire children to learn a foreign language. Studying French was enjoyable for many children but it was felt essential that children didn’t just associate language learning with French! By introducing other languages into the curriculum, children would be able to transfer and apply language learning skills and gain a broader level of inter-cultural understanding (both of which are at the core of the Primary MFL curriculum). Therefore, in 2015-2016, a new MFL model was introduced into the school.

*MFL learning was introduced into Key Stage 1 and Foundation Stage (for the first time).*

FS and Year 1 – Mandarin Chinese

Year 2 – French

*A subsidiary Language was introduced into Key Stage 2.*

This meant that for six weeks out of the year (in MFL lesson time) each year group studied a subsidiary language instead of French; the subsidiary language being Japanese in Year 5 and 6. The Japan Foundation’s Japanese Language Local Project Support Programme enabled the school to recruit a local Japanese Teacher to team teach with the school teacher.

Due to its success, this model will be continuing into the next academic year also (2016-2017).

### **School Partnership and the future:**

Our relationship with our partner school in Japan is getting stronger and stronger. Children are involved in small scale collaborative projects which involve both language and geography. As a school partnership, we are currently exploring avenues to strengthen this relationship with the aim to conduct staff (and possibly staff and pupil) visits.

### **Staffing:**

There is currently only one member of staff (who is part time) that would feel relatively confident in teaching Japanese. The support received from the Foundation's grant has enabled us to recruit Japanese Teachers that are able to work alongside other staff members. This has a professional development consideration as we may not always be in the position to employ specialists in the future; an investment in training other staff members is important.

### **Enrichment Opportunities and the local community**

2015-2016, Fleckney trialled an enrichment opportunity; we offered a 'parent and child' Japanese club. This gave the chance for parents (carers or grandparents) to enrol on a course of Japanese language and learn alongside their child! The response and feedback was extremely positive and, as a result, we are offering the same opportunity next academic year.

Another event was also trialled this year. Because of its success, we will be repeating it again next academic year. The event was offered to able linguists in six local schools and involved a day of Japanese learning. Local Japanese teachers were recruited for the day to run a carousel of activities for Year 5 and Year 6 pupils. Children carried out language activities, origami, calligraphy and learning the Japanese abacus (*soroban*). This will be developed further this year offering the opportunity to children from more schools.

### **Conclusions:**

1. Evaluations and pupil interviews show that the introduction of a subsidiary language into the MFL curriculum has 'inspired' children and engaged them towards language learning.
2. Involving as many staff members as possible in primary school will support the sustainability of the project and the new language model. Inspire and engage the staff, inspire and engage the pupils!
3. Enrichment activities which involve pupils and the local community are well received and fully supported. Children have thoroughly enjoyed learning alongside their parent / carer (and vice versa).

## Areas for development

1. Develop further the 'able linguist' day – involve the local secondary school and expand the network of Primary Schools.
2. Ensure progression - Encourage the local feeder secondary school to offer Japanese (and Mandarin) as an enrichment opportunity for pupils – this will give children who have been learning other languages the opportunity to continue (should they desire) when moving to KS3.

## Japanese at Prince Rock Primary School

*Simon Spry - Executive Headteacher*



### Background:

Prince Rock is a Community Primary School with three hundred and sixty children aged between four and eleven. The proportion of pupils in the school who are known to be eligible for free school meals and supported by the pupil premium is twice as high as the national average. Prince Rock Community Primary School is a city school which is proud to serve Prince Rock an impoverished part of the city.

### Rationale:

We wanted to introduce Japanese and Japan to our school because we love the language and we love the country and we wanted to share that with our children. To begin with our work started as an extra-curricular activity and a whole school day to expose the children to a new culture and language that they formally had no knowledge of.

### Partnerships:

We have developed a number of partnerships due to our commitment to introduce the children to Japanese experiences and language. We have been lucky enough to receive a huge amount of support from the Japan Foundation in a number of ways. They have provided us with grants that enabled us to buy a number of Japanese themed language books, to pay for a Japanese language teacher and by running a Japanese language workshop that one of our teachers was able to attend. The Japan Society also generously provided us with a grant which enabled us to pay for our Key Stage 2 drumming workshop. We approached a local secondary school whose Head of Languages won Teacher of the Year and is fluent in Japanese for advice. We approached the Professor of Music at the University of Plymouth who is one of the best Japanese flautists in the UK,

who came into school to deliver a series of lessons. We also found a local Japanese drumming company who run workshops for children and arranged for them to run workshops across Key Stage 2. Finally we have worked closely with other local schools who teach Japanese to add to our offer for the children.

### **Staffing:**

Our staff all took part in a 'Japanese Day' that we ran as a whole school and provided the children with a range of Japanese themed experiences e.g. sushi tasting, writing the numbers 1 to 10 in Japanese and making *koi* kites.

One of our staff members was able to attend a Japan Foundation's Japanese Language workshop for primary teachers in London.

One of our support staff speaks some Japanese and supports our school teaching of the subject.

### **Curriculum:**

Our Japanese Day enriched our curriculum by teaching the children about another culture and language. This wonderful day built superbly upon the rich weekly extracurricular teaching that goes on at Prince Rock.

## **Japanese at St Edmund Campion Catholic Primary School, Maidenhead**

*Catherine Rodrigues - Senior Leader & Language Coordinator*



### **Background**

St Edmund Campion Catholic Primary School is a popular 2-form entry school located in Maidenhead, Berkshire. The school is positioned on the same site as St Edmund Campion Catholic Church. The school's most recent Ofsted inspection was graded as Outstanding, with the comment, "*Lessons are typified by enthusiasm, enjoyment, engagement and exemplary behaviour and pupils are very well motivated.*"

Global learning is an important focus in the school and all teachers have a Global Learning qualification. In addition, as a Catholic school, children are encouraged to be stewards of God's world and to understand their role in the world as responsible global citizens by having an understanding of other faiths and cultures.

### **Rationale:**

Prior to 2014, the school taught two languages at Key Stage 2 (Spanish in Years 3&4 and

French in Years 5&6). Our Language Coordinator, Catherine Rodrigues, was motivated to switch to a multilingual approach after considering the outcomes of a research project completed by Reading University and funded by the Nuffield Foundation (*Primary Modern Languages: the impact of teaching approaches on attainment and preparedness for secondary school language learning*). This research project tracked language learners from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 and found that 89% preferred learning French at secondary school to primary school, citing lack of variety, too much repetition and a sense of stagnation as the main reasons.

Catherine was keen to ensure that language learners at St Edmund Campion enjoy learning a variety of languages and leave primary school with a strong motivation to continue learning languages at Key Stage 3. She discussed her ideas with the head teacher and governors who were keen to try a new multilingual approach.

### **Partnerships**

Currently there are no partnerships with Japanese schools, although this is under consideration.

### **Staffing**

All language lessons are taught by the Language Coordinator, Catherine Rodrigues during class teachers' PPA time. Thanks to a grant from the Japan Foundation, the school was able to recruit a native-level speaker to teach Japanese. Catherine assists in the lessons, with a view to continuing the teaching when the funding period comes to an end.

### **Curriculum**

In September 2014, the school embarked upon a multilingual approach to language learning in Key Stage 2. Children in Year 3 start their language learning journey by investigating and comparing languages spoken among their peers, then go on to study four languages in some depth. Sixty children currently study Japanese in Year 5. Lessons consist of reading and writing hiragana, simple conversations and learning about the culture of Japan e.g. arts, festivals, school life, food etc.

Year 3	Latin
Year 4	Spanish
Year 5	Japanese
Year 6	French

### **Outcomes**

The children have responded very positively to learning Japanese. They look forward to their weekly class and actively participate in lessons. The school also received positive feedback from parents who have enjoyed learning Japanese from their children.

Catherine's passion for the multilingual approach was recognised by ALL (Association for Language Learning) when she was named Primary Language Teacher of the Year 2015.

# Japanese as an Extra Curricular Activity at Yealmpstone Farm Primary School

Heidi Price - *Headteacher*



## Background and Rationale:

Languages are highly valued at Yealmpstone Farm, with French being taught to all children right from Foundation. We have a number of links with schools throughout Europe, and engage in a number of Erasmus programmes every year. Our current Erasmus projects include schools in France, Belgium, Sweden and Turkey. The school has a passion for global citizenship, a value which we feel is crucial in an area with limited cultural diversity. We encourage curiosity, questioning and exploration in our school, and offering children the opportunity to explore a culture as contrasting as Japan allows this.

We were able to secure funding from the Japan Foundation to support us in introducing Japanese as an extra-curricular activity. The Foundation has also supported us in securing a partner school. In October 2015, our head teacher Heidi Price was able to attend a trip to Japan with fellow head teachers.

This was an amazing experience which taught us a great deal about Japanese culture and school systems. The people were very welcoming and proud to show us their schools which had many similarities to ours, but also significant differences – the main ones being that every child takes a responsibility for cleaning the school and serving the lunch. Learning styles to teach English were based around an 'I say, you say' approach which gave the children a basic vocabulary and knowledge of simple English phrases. Particularly impressive was the incredible teamwork which was demonstrated through the drum displays and gymnastic achievements. The whole experience was life changing and enabled us to realise how important it is for us to provide opportunities for our children to learn about each other and develop relationships.

## Partnerships:

We have been partnered with Fukue Elementary School, a partnership which is in its infancy. We are using the link to allow the children to inform their Japanese peers about

their schooling and day to day life in England. The link also offers an opportunity for children on both sides to ask questions increasing their knowledge about life and culture in a society very different to their own. Our children have been fascinated by the facts that they have learned about day to day life in Japan, and have been surprised by how much they have in common with their peers in Japan.

We are hoping to arrange a visit to Japan for staff and children prior to the Tokyo Olympics.

### **Activities:**

Our Japanese programme is offered as a weekly after school club for Key Stage 2. The hour is used as an opportunity to explore three strands of Japanese culture: speaking and writing the language, researching lifestyle and culture, and carrying out traditional Japanese arts and crafts activities such as origami and brush painting.

We have used the Japan Society's *Ready Steady Nihon GO!* programme as a medium for teaching Japanese language. The careful progression of this has allowed the group to quickly learn key Japanese vocabulary, and to speak with confidence. Alongside the spoken language element, children have developed their knowledge of *kanji*. Ready Steady Nihon GO! also has a strand of key cultural objectives to explore, such as the traditional game of *tamairi*, learning to use chopsticks and making an origami cup. The programme allows children to track their own progress and see how quickly their knowledge of both language and culture is developing, as well as supporting the teacher with clear lesson plans and useful online resources.

As the club has developed, children have become increasingly interested in Japanese culture and have done research of their own. With this development, they have found a number of activities themselves that they have requested that we explore in our Japanese sessions. Through this, we have explored the anime style of drawing, Japanese Christmas traditions and other popular festivals.

Introducing Japanese to our school has been an exciting opportunity, and we are keen to strengthen our links with Fukue Elementary School and further develop our Japanese links in the future.

