

I had the pleasure of judging this year's annual ALLNE European Day of Languages competition; a fantastic opportunity for all children of school age to produce a piece of written work, this year based on the theme of 'A Magical Trip'. Upon walking into the judging room, the first thing that caught my eye was the sheer number of envelopes - the competition had clearly been well-received by schools, and I couldn't wait to get stuck in to the reading.

As someone who was born monolingual, I am so grateful to the amazing language teaching I received throughout my education, which led to my pursuing a degree in European Languages. I know that if I were still at school, I would have loved to have entered this competition as it encourages you to take your language skills and apply them creatively. I saw how the pupils had chosen to approach the topic - some children had written packing lists, some had written phrasebooks for their trips, some had done holiday brochures to advertise the tourist hotspots of their (real and fictional!) destinations, while some had written about a past trip that they had taken. There was even rhyming poetry!

Working with Les Puces I speak French daily, however it was great to read through the Spanish entries too. As well as the quality of the written work, what impressed me was the imagination (and downright zaniness) of many of the entries, and the wide variety of languages used. While key stage 3 and 4 entries were mainly written in French, Spanish, German or Mandarin, entries from primary school included writing in Lithuanian and Latvian. We also saw languages from further afield, including Arabic, Polish, Latin, Hindi, Urdu and Ndembele.

In our ever-globalising society, it is increasingly important for young people to enjoy expressing themselves diversely, and it is competitions like this that will lift the status of languages from primary school right through to the final days of year 13. I'd recommend it to all schools and look forward to reading all of the entries next year!

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