



Kate Percival is currently a Year 6 class teacher as well as a French teacher for Primary Languages Network (An ALL Corporate member) . Kate also works as a Primary MFL consultant for PLN, supporting individual schools and running CPD courses for language coordinators.

It began when, at the age of 10, I won a colouring competition; the prize being a short family holiday to the then newly opened *Euro Disneyland* in Paris! (Never underestimate the power of colouring.) Until then, I had never travelled abroad, I hadn't really heard any other languages being spoken and I certainly hadn't been formally taught any. It sparked a curiosity which remains with me still. For the first time, I was immersed in a language other than my own and I started to pick up sounds and words and associate meaning with them. I remember I bought the cassette of songs and listened to them over and over.

In the years that followed, I loved learning French and German from Year 7 through to GCSE and French to A-level. I went on to read a degree in French with *ab initio* Italian at The University of Warwick. This experience of starting a language from scratch as an adult learner is something I still talk to my pupils about today. I embarked on a degree without knowing any Italian but because of the language learning skills I had acquired until then, I knew *how* a language worked and I knew how I learnt language best.

Part of my degree was spent in France, and I still have fond memories of living in Lyon, especially of their Festival of Lights on the 8th December where the whole city seems to come together in celebration of something culturally very magical.

After an initial postgraduate career in TV and Film Casting (my drama skills still feature in my lessons now), I became a language assistant in six schools, under the guidance of Janet Lloyd and then took the plunge to complete my full teaching qualification (GTP). Thirteen years later, my favourite thing to teach is certainly still languages and I have become a specialist in primary languages and a subject coordinator at my school. Being in the unusual position of teaching for part of the week and supporting teachers for the other part is hugely beneficial as I can have empathy with the coordinators I support; I understand the reality of primary school life with all the joys and challenges that come along with it.

I love how primary languages can act as a great leveller for children at KS2. As a visiting teacher in one of my schools, I only know pupils for their abilities in French, not for their Maths or English attainment and often the two do not correlate. Sometimes, the advantage of speaking a home language or merely being allowed a fresh start in a new subject can motivate pupils and when they achieve, this in itself motivates them even further! One child

in particular comes to mind, who is a learner with additional needs, yet greets me each week in French and spontaneously starts saying a clapping rhyme we learnt earlier on in the year. You can't help but smile!