

Hummersknott Academy

Case study – Mandarin at Hummersknott Academy, Darlington

Background:

Hummersknott Academy is a larger than average 11-16 academy situated in Darlington. It also supports a larger than average primary school in the town that makes up the wider Hummersknott Academy Trust.

The Academy is a true comprehensive school that is an integral part of the community. As such, its facilities are used by approximately 5,000 people each week in addition to its daily use by students.

Hummersknott was a Language Specialist College that converted to academy status in 2011. As a Language College the school developed its provision and now delivers Italian, French, German, Spanish and Mandarin to key stages 3 and 4. In 2015 approximately 60% of all students studied two languages to GCSE with overall language courses being above national averages for A*-C expected.

Hummersknott Academy has, and continues to carry out exemplary work promoting Chinese culture and language across the North East.

Rationale:

We are proud and privileged to be a Confucius Classroom and as Principal I feel this is a significant aspect of our wider curriculum provision. Our vibrant Confucius Classroom has a wide range of activities including the teaching of Mandarin to GCSE, a range of cultural activities and an extensive outreach programme. Also, Hummersknott was Confucius Classroom of the year 2014.

Partnerships:

Hummersknott has many annual cultural exchanges, including one to Guangdong. We are actively engaged in developing shared Team and Leadership programmes with our partner schools. In addition we work with Higher Education establishments to offer Initial Teacher Training in Mandarin.

Our support and sponsorship of a local primary school has given us the opportunity to develop Mandarin at Key Stage 1 and 2 through shared use of Hanban Teachers and resident Mandarin specialist. Pupils are now entering year 7 with a strong grasp of basic Mandarin and this can only help develop the number of Mandarin speakers as they progress through school.

Staffing:

We have been teaching Mandarin within the curriculum since 2001 and Hummersknott was one of the first waves of Confucius Classrooms as part of the IOE Confucius Institute. We currently have one full-time teacher of Mandarin supported by two Chinese teaching assistants.

Curriculum:

All students are allocated French in Year 7 and study this for five periods a fortnight. Mandarin then becomes an option, as a second language, to all in Year 8. We also deliver Mandarin at four other local primary schools.

Outcomes:

Outcomes of GCSE Mandarin continue to be excellent. In 2015 100% of our cohort gained expected progress and 71% achieved above expected progress. In addition to qualifications, we have found that offering Chinese language and culture is a significant consideration for students when applying to Hummersknott Academy. One of our key aims as an Academy Trust is to provide a range of inspirational opportunities for our young people; we believe that our Mandarin programme does precisely that and contributes to our wider ethos.