



Woodfall Primary and Nursery School

MFL curriculum statement

(Modern language taught: French)

At Woodfall Primary and Nursery School, Language learning enables pupils to express their ideas and thoughts in another language, and to understand and respond to its speakers. In this respect, it is the development of practical, useful knowledge for all 21st century young people. Yet it is clear that language learning is not only a matter of developing competence in another language, important though this is. It is about the broader curriculum; about children exploring the relationship between language and identity, about developing an international outlook and an enhanced understanding of the world and their place within it. As the opening statement of the new Programme of Study puts it: “Learning a foreign language is a liberation from insularity and provides an opening to other cultures.” This has never been more crucial.

Learning another language is full of rich opportunities to develop pupils’ spiritual, moral and cultural experiences. Intercultural understanding plays a central role in how languages are taught, with themes of identity and our place in the wider world put under the spotlight.

Videos, songs, rhymes and stories all enrich pupils’ experience with cultural insights into other people’s lives. Pupils may try out aspects of another culture in their classroom, such as food, clothes or celebrations, building a positive understanding of key features of personal and national identity, values and beliefs.

Learning a language equips pupils to express themselves in new ways. This develops their immediate sense of belonging to the wider world and starts to prepare them for future opportunities in modern life. Teachers look for opportunities for their pupils to communicate with pupils who speak other languages. This is invaluable for moving beyond stereotypical views of the culture of a country, and discovering that the similarities are as striking as the differences.

At a deeper level, learning a language confronts pupils with the fact that the way in which they see the world is just one of many possible ways. The words we use for things are arbitrary labels, not derived from the essence of the things themselves. In other languages, things are said in different ways. For example, a French learner of English would find it odd that we put the adjective before the noun, describing something before saying what it is. Pupils studying for the English spelling, grammar and punctuation test may be relieved to know that in other languages, parts of speech are not necessarily as fluid. Nouns cannot be forced into serving as

adjectives, so in French “a cheese sandwich” is “a sandwich of cheese.” Learning a language in KS2 means pupils grow up with this understanding as their world-view is developing, without the defensiveness of an older learner who feels that language learning challenges their settled world-view.

British Values do not have to be defined in opposition to the values of others, just as one family can define what values are important to them, without implying that other families do not have equally valid principles. Learning another language develops an understanding and respect for diversity, removing barriers between cultures. It is also an opportunity to look at shared values and aspirations, such as personal liberty, democracy and the rule of law. It can help us understand that the particular blend of values we cherish is not universal, but is the result of on-going social and historical collective choices.

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