

## BACKGROUND

School name: **Dormers Wells High School**

Youth Sports Trust Area: **Ealing**

Dormers Wells High School is a high-achieving mathematics and computing college and leading edge comprehensive school for 11-19 year olds. Our sixth form opened in September 2009.

Over 70% of students speak English as an additional language with over forty different community languages spoken.

In 2010 GCSE students received 65% 5A\*-C in GCSE's without EM and 53% without.

## PROCESS

Students were invited from Year 8 to take part in this six week programme if they were lacking motivation and confidence in language learning and did not participate in a PE club. The aim of our Active Languages programme was to increase motivation in the languages classroom and to increase the chance of these students getting involved in a PE club in the future.

The purpose of the programme was to develop language learning through sport with a specific focus on the following:

- to develop confidence and motivation in language learning
- to develop problem solving and communication skills
- to develop leadership skills

The key and unique aspect of the programme was that students revised and built upon French vocabulary during each session. We hoped that the programme would show students how language learning can happen outside the classroom and how useful it can be. We also hoped that students would see the enjoyment they could get from attending a PE club. Throughout the programme we aimed to develop student's leadership and problem-solving skills that are promoted and encouraged in all the subjects they study. The programme allowed for very positive cross-curricular links to be made.

## IMPLEMENTING THE PROJECT

We began the project by asking all the languages teachers to choose five students from their Year 8 language groups that they felt could do with a confidence and motivation boost in language learning. Once we had a comprehensive list the PE department cross-referenced the list to ensure that they were also students who would benefit from taking part in a club. We came out with a list of 25 students.

We invited all 25 students to a lunchtime meeting saying that 'an exciting opportunity' awaited them. Most students showed up and seemed keen with our proposal that every Friday they would have an Active Languages session during lesson 5 instead of attending their timetabled lesson for six weeks. This would mostly affect the Maths and Science departments and luckily both departments agreed to the programme going ahead. At the lunchtime meeting all students received a letter to be signed by a parent/carers. We received eighteen returns to this letter.

During the first session students drew up the aims and objectives of the programme and created their own contract of rules and sanctions that they felt participants in the programme should adhere to. Students also decided the success criteria of the programme. These were printed on the back of the vocabulary booklet they received in Session 2. The programme then began officially with some team building exercises and games.

During the second session students received their booklets and signed their contract. Students also received Active Languages t-shirts and now felt part of a club. Session 2 to 6 concentrated on games in the target language from athletic and ball games to bowling and even an obstacle course. Students were introduced to or revised the vocabulary at the beginning of the session and then expected to use the language throughout the games. At the end of each session students had to nominate the best team player and the person who made the most effort to use the target language. These students received merits for their diaries. As the sessions continued students were asked to lead more and more activities and were asked to reflect on the leadership and team work skills they were quickly acquiring.

Although the programme had come to an end we called all participants to another meeting during lunchtime and told them that there would be an award ceremony and that they could invite their parents/carers and other family members should they wish. Students were given invitations to bring home and get signed. Students were also involved in the organisation of the awards ceremony.



On the day of the ceremony parents and carers were met by Y11 prefects and led to the sports hall for a display of students doing demonstrations and activities that showed the language and leadership skills they had acquired. Parents and carers were then asked to study some vocabulary themselves and then became the students while their children led them through activities such as bowling and completing a blindfolded obstacle course. Students then received individual medals and certificates for having completed the programme and also received a goodie bag from SOAS. The head teacher presented all awards to the students in front of their proud parents and carers. All guests were then led to the library where a French themed 'Goûter' awaited them. We are extremely thankful to Renata Albuquerque from SOAS and Paul Blagburn from London Metropolitan University who were able to join us for the ceremony and who also made speeches for parents and participants on the importance of learning languages and of getting involved in sport.

## IMPACT AND ENDORSEMENT

Students thoroughly enjoyed the experience and this is most evident in their own testimonies:

### Student accounts:

1. "Active Languages was about leadership, learning how to use French in activities and

increasing motivation. We learnt how to use French in bowling by saying how many we got and whose turn it was. We also did an obstacle course in French which was fun. We all worked well as a team and sometimes we got in two groups but we always worked well together. We recommend this as a good activity as we can learn more French and have fun at the same time. We also recommend this to people that may struggle with French”

2. “The main point of Active Languages was to improve your French, to show off your leadership skills and to have fun. All of the activities we did were in a group so we used teamwork a lot. I recommend Active Languages to carry on as it is a good way to learn French. At the end we had a celebration where parents and carers came in and we had awards”.

Student behaviour in languages lessons has improved as most now see that languages can move outside the classroom. As teachers we also learned from this experience of how much we can challenge our students and enjoyed the programme as much as the students.

To measure the success and impact of the course we can use the following information:

- Feedback from students through a self-evaluation form which was very positive
- Feedback from parents at the awards ceremony which was all very positive
- Feedback from class teachers as to whether motivation in lessons has improved in both subject areas
- Progress Checks in both subjects

The long term impact will be evident in:

- Y9 Level 1 FCSE results in MFL (2010/11)
- Uptake of PE and other extra-curricular clubs (Sept/Oct 2010)
- Uptake of both PE and MFL at KS4

## **FURTHER DEVELOPMENT**

The work will be developed further in school through the MFL department. We hope to now take some of our groups outside the classroom and to do games and activities in the main or sports hall where possible. We will decide on return in September whether it is feasible to run the programme once again.

Having now gone through the programme with the students and seeing the benefits of taking language outside the classroom we have already run an Enrichment Day of language learning through sport. This was with the entire Y8 cohort. We organised Arsenal Double Club to come out and run Spanish and French football activities.

Students thoroughly enjoyed the enrichment day. This is an enrichment day activity that we definitely wish to run again next year.

