

CASE STUDY

Cheadle Hulme School, Infant & Junior School

Independent, mixed, day school

Cheadle Hulme, Greater Manchester

Written by Rebecca Fox-Partridge, Languages Coordinator



How we use WoLLoW - Pre-School

I work with pupils from preschool, enthusing them with language learning from their first week in school. Here, I focus on French but, since starting to teach WoLLoW 5 years ago, that holistic approach is always on my mind. The youngest of our pupils are also the least inhibited and are very receptive. Whilst we don't begin formal WoLLoW teaching at this point, we do encourage our young pupils with other languages to step forward and share. For example, in preschool this year we have Spanish and Arabic speakers and, whilst these children have only been a part of the school community for a matter of weeks, they have already had the chance to share this exciting part of their lives and their peers have enjoyed experimenting with new sounds.

How we use WoLLoW - Year 5 onwards

This celebration of language diversity in the school community continues throughout and then more formal WoLLoW teaching begins in Year 5 and continues to Year 6. A highlight is always seeing where pupils place themselves on the imaginary line of multilingualism, seeing themselves as mostly monolingual, and then for them to re-assess their position and re-place themselves along the line, reassured in the knowledge that they are more multilingual than they may have first thought. This moment invites them in, giving them confidence to explore further as a fully equipped linguist who understands the importance of communication. It also sets the tone for a key aspect of WoLLoW - discussion and exploration.

Our favourite lesson

A lesson I particularly enjoy is when I ask pupils to bring in an item from home which they feel is special to their cultural identity. I interview the pupils about their items and this invariably enables their peers to enjoy a glimpse of other cultures and also brings out lots of language with roots from across a wide linguistic spectrum. This particular activity can be something which begins conversations about aspects of cultural heritage at home which, for whatever reason, families have chosen to push to the background. Suddenly, they are seeing that their child's school is making this a priority and they are encouraged to do so too. Family stories are unearthed and shared - for example, one girl brought in a bugle played by her Polish great grandfather during World War 2. This activity prompted the required motivation to unlock her Polish background and made her determined to learn more Polish.

The response from pupils

The response from pupils to WoLLoW is hugely positive. Historically, language lessons in the UK have been full of what I would call "scare moments" with apprehension about mis-pronunciation or grammatical error. WoLLoW dispels these fears as there is very much a culture of finding out together. When we have explained the concept to parents they are always on board with it and see it as a key way for us to broaden our understanding of the diverse communities on our doorstep.

PUPIL FEEDBACK

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TEACHER FEEDBACK

For me, WoLLoW has given a fresh dimension in my teaching. It makes me think about languages in the broader sense. I will always be passionate about French but I see that there is no hierarchy of languages - I want my pupils to value and love the languages that are key to their lives, whether they are spoken by billions of people or by a small handful.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

WoLLoW has energised our community to celebrate cultural and language diversity beyond the classroom. Last May we asked our school community to come out on a given Sunday to celebrate their culture and language for “Multicultural CHS” - it was a vibrant release of colour and joy with so many opportunities to experience our school’s diversity first hand. WoLLoW also offers a wider context to European Day of Languages (26 September) and this year we asked pupils in Years 5 and 6 to give considered answers to “Which language would you like to learn and why?”

FIND OUT MORE!

I am happy to share further through WoLLoW more about what we do with WoLLoW at Cheadle Hulme School and how I have used and adapted the resources. I would love to hear about your ideas too.

Rebecca Fox-Partridge is Languages Coordinator in the Infant & Junior School at Cheadle Hulme School; an independent, co-educational day school near Stockport, Greater Manchester. WoLLoW is also delivered as a popular enrichment class in the Senior School.

