

Case Study – UK Schools Teaching Japanese



Netherthong Primary School Yorkshire



Key Facts about the School:

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Number of students: 211 (2011-12)

Age range: 4-11

Type of school: Community Primary School

Brief description of the school:

Netherthong Primary School is a community school located in a small village near Huddersfield. It lies in the beautiful Holme Valley in the metropolitan borough of Kirklees in West Yorkshire.

The school encourages the development of mutual respect and tolerance within a happy, hardworking atmosphere. Pupils are kind and thoughtful towards each other and care about world issues such as poverty and the environment. Pupils are 'active citizens' and Netherthong has been awarded Investors In Pupils status which recognises the contribution children make to taking responsibility for their own learning and making important decisions for school improvement.

The curriculum is rich and creative, aiming to develop the intellectual, expressive, physical, spiritual, moral, cultural and social skills of pupils of all abilities. Japanese is taught as an extracurricular subject after school for Year 6 pupils, but has also been introduced to the whole school in assembly and via the older pupils.

Japanese set up:

Number of Japanese language students: 22 (Out of 32 in Y6)

Netherthong teaches Japanese as an extra curricular subject after school from 3:15 to 4:15pm Year Groups: Pupils are given a taster of Japanese in the summer term of Year 5, and then all Year 6 pupils are invited to attend the class.

Japanese time-table:

Year Group	Study Hours per Week	Number of Students	Number of Groups
Year 5	1 (from summer term)	n/a	1
Year 6	1	22	1

Japanese compared to other MFLs:

The main language taught at Netherthong is French. This is taught from Year 3 onwards in approximately 30 minute slots. Year 5s and 6s are taught by a teacher from a local secondary school to ensure continuity of language learning when they move into Key Stage 3.

In addition to French, pupils have learnt songs in Spanish and German. The pupils love languages and are very fast learners.

Case study updated: Winter 2011-2012



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Success Story: Transition to KS3

2010-11 was the first cohort for Japanese language studies at Netherthong Primary School. Nevertheless, the pupils who took part enjoyed the class so much that after they moved up to Holmfirth High school, they wrote to their new head teacher to ask if they could continue to learn Japanese. Now a Japanese language class has been set up at Holmfirth High School and pupils can continue to improve their Japanese language even after they have left Netherthong. There are now 24 pupils studying at the Japanese club at Holmfirth.



Exams:

Pupils studying Japanese may take the Asset Languages breakthrough level Japanese qualification. This enables recognition of the children's hard work in language learning and can be a good way to motivate them. The course can be tailored to suit the interests of the class, and allows them to study culture along with basic language acquisition. To find out more about Asset language qualifications for primary Schools, see the Asset Languages website:

www.assetlanguages.org.uk/teachers/primary.asp

Japanese Exam Results:

Last summer, nine students attempted the Asset language breakthrough exams. As their lessons had focused primarily on speaking, they found the reading sections quite difficult. Four out of the nine pupils passed all four sections and everyone else passed three out of four sections. Considering the children only began to learn hiragana (a Japanese phonetic alphabet) the previous term, this was an impressive result.



History of Japanese

Japanese was introduced at Netherthong after one of the Y6 teachers, Martin Clayton, mentioned that he could speak Japanese to the headmistress. The class started in the same way it is taught now, with a small group of Year 6 pupils learning Japanese after school.



The club is now in its second year, and has grown to two-thirds of the year group. The current Year 6 pupils had the chance to start Japanese in their final term of Year 5, and they are learning very quickly.

Budget:

The main costs to the school are for the teacher's time, as well as photocopying and resources. The school has also covered travel for their Japanese teacher to visit the Japan Conference for Schools, held at the Embassy of Japan in London, as well as the travel costs for a Japanese volunteer to visit on the Japan Foundation's Japanese Taster for Schools (JTS) programme.

Support:

Netherthong has applied for funding from the Japan Foundation's Local Project Support Programme to help purchase more Japanese language resources to enable them to start teaching Japanese within the curriculum. The school has also applied for funding from the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation for help in funding a possible trip to Japan.



Netherthong has also recently benefitted from the Japan Taster for Schools programme run by the Japan Foundation. A volunteer visited the school to give a Japanese language lesson to Year 5-6, followed by an assembly where the whole school had the chance to learn a little about Japan.

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Networking

Mr Clayton, the Japanese teacher attended the Japan Conference for Schools which was co-organised by the Embassy of Japan, the Japan Foundation and the Japan Society, and hosted at the Embassy of Japan in October 2011. This was a chance to network and to find out how about Japan-related projects at other primary schools in the UK.

The school has also recently joined the 'Kitano-kai' a networking group for teachers of Japanese in the North of England. This group was established in 2010 with the aid of funding from the Japan Foundation's Local Project Support Programme.



Resources

The first year was difficult as both teacher and students did not know what to work to for the Asset Language Breakthrough exams.

Mr Clayton used the Japan Foundation's [KS2 scheme of work](#) to get ideas and find subjects to teach at roughly the correct level. He then used these ideas to make resources from that would suit the children and ensure they maintain their interest in Japanese. In addition the class has used Ready Steady NiHonGO, from the Japan Foundation's [primary resources](#) page and other websites such as you tube for songs.



Exchanges and Trips:

The school has recently established a relationship with a partner school in Japan: Miyoshigaoka Elementary School in Aichi. One of Miyoshigaoka's teachers interacts with Netherthong students on their school website and through the Japan Society's '[Japan UK live](#)' website. Netherthong pupils are enthusiastic about this interaction, and regularly check the website at home as well as during school hours. Netherthong's staff are keen to start a trip to Japan in the future if possible.



Challenges of Japanese:

One challenge of teaching Japanese at primary level is overcoming the fears of parents that it might be too difficult for their children. Netherthong Primary School is lucky to be located in an area with very supportive parents. The children themselves have taken to Japanese with great enthusiasm and ease.

Japanese Teaching Staff 2010-2011:

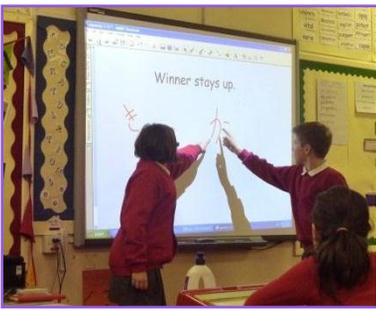
One non-native teacher of Japanese who is currently a Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HTLA) but is completing his NQT year to gain qualified teacher status. He is paid separately for his time teaching Japanese after school.

Long-term future:

Both the head of Netherthong, Catherine Jubbs and the Japanese teacher, Martin Clayton hope that Japanese will continue to be taught at Netherthong, and possibly brought into the curriculum in the future. They are considering teaching a Japanese song and short Japanese language tasters for the younger classes. They would also like to hold a Japan day.

Advice to other schools in a similar position:

At Netherthong, Japanese lessons are open to everyone, but if you are unsure about introducing it, you can target it to gifted and talented students or as an enrichment subject, then monitor the take-up.



**“Japanese gives the children a model for life-long language learning.
The mix of enrichment and language learning opens up their minds!”**

Catherine Jubbs, Headmaster of Netherthong Primary School



**Would you like to know more about how the Japan Foundation
can support Japanese at your school?**

Contact us today to find out how we can help you:

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