

Case Study – UK Schools Teaching Japanese



St Edmund Campion Catholic Primary School - Maidenhead



Key Facts about the School:

Address: Altwood Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 4PX

Telephone: 01628 620183

Email: school@st-edmund.org.uk

Website <http://www.st-edmund.org.uk/>

Number of students: 390

Age range: 4-11

Type of school: Voluntary Aided Primary School

Case study updated: Spring 2015

Brief description of the school:

St Edmund Campion Catholic Primary is a very popular school located to the west of Maidenhead. The school is positioned on the same site as St Edmund Campion Catholic Church. The school's most recent Ofsted inspection was graded as Outstanding, with the comment, "Lessons are typified by enthusiasm, enjoyment, engagement and exemplary behaviour and pupils are very well motivated." Global learning is an important focus in the school and all teachers have a Global Learning qualification. As a Catholic school, children are encouraged to be stewards of God's world and to understand their role in the world as responsible global citizens by having an understanding of other faiths and cultures.

Language Learning Set up:

The school has chosen to take a multilingual approach to language learning in Key Stage 2. Children spend time investigating and comparing languages spoken among their peers, then go on to study four languages in some depth.

They study Japanese, Latin, French, and Spanish. In 2014-2015 Japanese was the main language studied by Year 4 and Year 5, a total of 105 children. The school plans to continue this approach in subsequent years, so that in 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 Year 5 children will learn Japanese. The children have responded very positively to learning Japanese. They look forward to their weekly class and actively participate in lessons. The school also received positive feedback from parents who have enjoyed learning Japanese from their children.

Support for Japanese

The school has been awarded grants from the Japan Foundation for both 2014-2015 and 2015-2016. This has helped pay for a native-level speaker to assist in teaching their Japanese lessons. In addition to this, the Languages Coordinator Catherine Rodrigues is an enthusiastic language learner. She has attended some Japan Foundation workshops and taught herself basic Japanese, in order to then teach her pupils.



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Japanese Students Visit

In February 2015, fifteen Japanese students from Tohoku Fukushi University visited the school, arranged by the University of Reading. These students participated in the weekly Japanese lessons in Year 5 and observed some other classes. They also brought a present of some origami paper and exchanged some origami with St Edmund Campion's origami club enthusiasts.

Children and students spent some time talking to each other to find out about life and school in their respective countries. The [school's website](#) reports, "In a short space of time, friendships were made and this was undoubtedly a day that neither the students nor the teachers will ever forget." The children enjoyed the experience so much that the school has offered to host another group next year.



"I learnt so much about Japanese culture and even picked up some new words. It was sooo fun!" Year 5 pupil.

Japan Assembly:

In addition to studying the Japanese language, St Edmund Campion's Year 4 pupils were also given the opportunity to learn about Japan. At the end of term the class presented a wonderful school assembly all about Japan. They shared their learning about the language and culture of Japan with the rest of the school and with parents who also came to watch. You can see some of their photos [here](#).

Resources for Japanese:

Japanese has been taught using a combination of the Japan Foundation's Scheme of Work for Key Stage 2 and Ready Steady Nihongo, which are both available for free online. The class teacher attended a free training session for primary teachers during the summer holiday, to help her prepare for teaching Japanese. She then commented, "I appreciate the quality of the teaching materials made available, namely the Japan Foundation's Scheme of Work. It's fantastic that this Scheme of Work is made available free of charge."

Benefits to the students:

Children are exposed to a variety of languages and cultures, thereby opening up their minds to the prospect of further language learning at KS3. By comparing languages, children are able to look for similarities and differences in grammar and syntax. Children are interested in learning about different cultures and languages so motivation to continue learning languages in the future is high.



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Club Taishikan

The school used part of the Japan Foundation's grant to pay for a coach for the children to visit [Club Taishikan](#).

This is a workshop run by the Embassy of Japan aimed at introducing various aspects of Japan to young people. Children had the chance to visit the Embassy, try their hand at calligraphy and even try *Yosakoi* dancing.



Embassy of Japan's resource box:

The school borrowed [The Matsuri Set](#) (Festival Set) from the Embassy of Japan, so during their assembly, each child wore a *kimono* or a *happi coat*. They also got to see various Japanese regalia, including a huge carp that is traditionally hung outside during the Children's Day festival.



Doubutsu Shogi:

The class teacher, Catherine, attended a workshop about Doubutsu Shogi (a kind of Japanese chess played with animals rather than traditional chess pieces). After this, she purchased some Doubutsu Shogi boards so that children could learn about Japanese culture and have fun practising Japanese greetings when playing with a partner. The children have enjoyed the game so much that they set up a lunchtime club to continue playing the game. In a world of online games, children have really warmed to playing a traditional board game.



Teachers:

The Languages Coordinator, Catherine Rodrigues, won an award for [Primary Language Teacher of the Year](#) from the Association of Language Learning at [Language World](#) 2015. Catherine leads all of the language classes within the school. Catherine trained to be a teacher through the Graduate Teacher Programme at the school, but with a degree in languages, she was always enthusiastic about passing on her love of languages.

Hurdles the school has overcome:

When the school was trying to recruit a native level Japanese speaker the Japan Foundation was able to introduce them to a vast network of Japanese speakers. This was very effective and there were six applications from local people. Fortunately the school was able to recruit a wonderful native Japanese speaker via this network - with no recruitment costs.



Challenges of Japanese:

The support of the Japan Foundation has been integral in establishing Japanese as a new language in the curriculum. Previously there was no knowledge of Japan or Japanese in the school, but with support even non-Japanese speakers can introduce Japanese to the curriculum as the Scheme of Work contains teacher notes and embedded sound files in PowerPoint documents so that children can hear a native Japanese speaker pronounce the words.

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Long-term future:

Financial support is available from the Japan Foundation for three years and this is important when embedding Japanese in the curriculum. It is hoped that with continued support and training, Japanese lessons will continue after this funding ends. If you would like to find out more about the Japan Foundation's funding programme, please look online: www.jpff.org.uk/language/funding.php

Some information from Year 4

Here are some of the responses of what the children had learnt and what they would like to learn next in February 2015.

What we know now	What we'd like to know
Sumo wrestling – train like brothers and eat a lot to put on weight	Say the days of the week and months of the year.
Hai means yes	Japanese flag. Why these colours?
Tallest building in Tokyo is Skytree	Are their Christmas and Easter traditions the same as ours?
Mount Fuji is a dormant volcano, revered mountain and tallest mountain in Japan	What do people eat for breakfast. Lunch and dinner? What do they drink? What fruits grow in Japan?
Different alphabet	Toys and playground games.
Language: Greetings, classroom instructions, how are you, what's your name, how old are you?	Do Japanese children have a uniform? Do they get homework? How long is their school day?
Shrines are peaceful places to pray	What do Japanese people sleep on?
How to bow when greeting Japanese people	What side of the road do Japanese drive on?
There are 4 main islands the one in the north is cold, and in the south it is like the Mediterranean.	Why do sumo wrestlers have long hair? What do they do when they retire? Who is the fattest sumo wrestler in Japan?
Fastest train in the world – bullet train	How long to fly to Japan?
Numbers – 1-20	Count to 1000
Honda is a Japanese company	Is there a Royal family?
Japan have their own version of a world map where Japan is at the centre	What is daily life like in Japan?



Advice to other schools in a similar position

Even if you have no knowledge of Japanese, rest assured that the Japan Foundation provides financial support, teaching materials, training and helpful advice to assist you in introducing Japanese to your primary school. The children get such a lot out of learning about Japan's culture and language. They look forward to Japanese lessons. All you need is enthusiasm and drive to do something new.

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:

Josephine Austin, Programme Officer
Japan Foundation, London
Lion Court, 25 Proctor Street
London WC1V 6NY

Tel: 020 3102 5021
Email: josephine.austin@jpf.org.uk
Website: www.jpff.org.uk/language

