

# Archbishop Sentamu Academy

## **Case-Study – introducing Mandarin in an area of significant deprivation.**

### **Background:**

Archbishop Sentamu Academy is an 11-18 academy situated in East Hull. Our make-up is 99% white working class, and the ward from which our students come is the 12<sup>th</sup> most deprived in the country. Over the past 10 years, we have built up our Mandarin provision to the extent that it is our most successful language at GCSE, and is studied by around 1000 young pupils in total including pupils in our local primary schools. How have we got there?

### **Rationale:**

As a Headteacher, I strongly believe that when you become the leader of a school, you always inherit a number of great opportunities upon which to build. In ASA's case, one of those was a fledgling link with China, which had been going for 3 years or so before I arrived. At that time, it was operating more as an extra-curricular activity, but even then, a few pupils had visited Beijing. Fortunately, this link had been established by the Deputy Head, who would later become our Senior Vice-Principal, and between us, we decided to develop Chinese into a subject that we would offer as part of our core curriculum.

### **Partnerships:**

ASA itself has an annual student exchange with our partner school in Beijing, and each of our primary schools also has a partner school. We welcome a number of teachers each year from China for teacher training, and in 2015, we were delighted that one of our students was accepted into Goldsmith's College, London, to read Politics and Chinese.

We became a Confucius Classroom in 2014, and when three of the primary schools joined our Multi Academy Trust in 2015, we were able to provide Chinese assistants for them through Hanban.

### **Staffing:**

For the first three years, we invited teachers from our partner school in Beijing to come and teach our students in Years 7-9. This meant an element of double-funding, as we had to make sure that they were supported by a fully-qualified teacher. By the time these students were in Year 10 however, we realised that we would need a fully-trained Mandarin teacher who would be able to take our students through to GCSE. We were very fortunate to find an excellent teacher

who was looking to work at secondary level, and Liqun remains with us to this day.

### **Curriculum:**

Chinese is one of the 3 main languages offered; the other two languages are French and Spanish. Students are allocated to one language in Year 7 and study it for 3 periods a fortnight in Years 7 and 8. From September 2015, Year 9 French and Spanish students are allowed to opt for Chinese and this group of students has been given 7 periods every fortnight.

In addition to pupils studying it as a core language in years 7-9, by 2014, we were offering GCSE (equivalent to a grade D) to students in Year 11. This inevitably meant that we took a small hit in the performance tables. However, it has always been my personal conviction that we should put pupils' interests before performance tables, so we took the hit and worked hard to get the next year's students to GCSE. We succeeded, and in 2015, our Mandarin GCSE results were the most successful language results in the academy.

We are now offering Mandarin at Pre-U post-16, as a way of preparing our students for university study. Film study is offered at A level in the 6<sup>th</sup> form which ties in nicely with that part of the Pre-U Culture paper.

Meanwhile, from 2013 we had also been developing Mandarin with a number of our partner primary schools. Here, the pupils are introduced to Chinese language and culture in a fun way, and given a head-start for study in Y7.

### **Outcomes:**

All in all, our journey to develop Mandarin across our MAT has been one of the most enjoyable long-term projects of my career. Firstly, it is wonderful to introduce something that proves inspirational to so many young people, and to see them succeed in it. Whether it is learning about the Chinese culture, tackling hanzi, practicing the spoken language or taking part in an exchange, our students have both enjoyed and risen to the challenge of a subject that takes them well out of their "comfort zone". Through our Mandarin programme, we now have students who are aspiring to study it at university, and some even want to work in China. However, all of our students have gained a fantastic perspective on one of the world's most interesting nations, and a key trading partner. We believe that they have a competitive advantage in the job market – crucially important when many come from families that have experienced generations of unemployment.

Secondly, speaking personally, it has been most rewarding to build something up "properly", rather than in a hurry "because the DfE/OfSTED require it". By deliberately not trying to introduce GCSE Chinese before we were truly in a position to do so, we have arrived at the point where we have strong GCSE

provision. Crucially, we have had much-needed fun, at a time when the exigencies of the accountability regime can perhaps at times take the joy out of education.

Finally, we have found that offering Chinese language and culture is a significant attraction for pupils to apply for our academy. One of our key aims as a Multi Academy Trust is to provide a range of inspirational opportunities for our young people; we believe that our Chinese programme does precisely that.