

# Devonport High School for Girls

## Case Study: Introducing Mandarin Chinese into the Curriculum

### Background:

Devonport High School for Girls (DHSG) is a girls' selective state grammar school with academy status and students aged 11 – 18. It is located in Plymouth, South West England. Students come from a wide variety of socio-economic backgrounds, from both urban and rural areas. Since 2006 the provision of Mandarin Chinese has developed rapidly from being an enrichment subject to being offered as one of the second languages in the curriculum. Total no. of students currently studying Mandarin is 76.

### Rationale:

The school's aim is to provide equal opportunities for all students to achieve their full potential and through the varied international links to develop a wider understanding of global cultures and languages. As a Specialist Languages College it was decided that the introduction of Mandarin as the required non-European language would be appropriate to help prepare students for future employment in the global market. There is also a strong ethnic population of Chinese origin in Plymouth, particularly at the University and Further Education College with which the school works closely. The link with a school in Jiaxing, China, was established through a partnership between that city and Plymouth following a visit by a delegation from Plymouth which included the school's Director of Specialism, who eventually became International Coordinator and Confucius Classroom Manager. On that basis, it was decided that the school should actively pursue its plans to develop Mandarin within the curriculum.

### Partnerships:

DHSG students have regularly taken part in exchange visits and exciting cultural events such as a reciprocal drama project, where students from Plymouth and students from Jiaxing spent two weeks in each city preparing bi-lingual performances of a modified version of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, with great success. When DHSG became the lead school in our UCL IOE Confucius Classroom consortium with four other schools (the Peninsula Group Confucius Classroom (PGCC) - established in the second IOE Confucius Institute cohort in 2007) the opportunity to embed Mandarin in the life of the school and to play a guiding role in the development of Mandarin within the community in the South West, presented itself. Students of Mandarin have participated with other PGCC students in an activity day run by the Tourist Organisation in the South West, to produce a video on the area aimed at attracting Chinese tourists. They were joined in that activity by students from two local

primary schools where Chinese is being taught as part of the Primary Languages strategy, with the (Hanban) teacher provided by the UCL IOE Confucius Classroom consortium.

Students also have the opportunity to take part in the UCL IOE CI summer camp and the PGCC is represented on the UCL IOE CI National Headteachers Steering Group. The role of the Hanban teachers is extremely important in fostering a strong link with local schools in both primary and secondary sectors. They provide workshops and Chinese Enrichment Days in up to 60 schools a year in the South West and are proving a strong motivating factor in the UCL IOE Confucius Classroom schools with their support in lessons and in cultural workshops. Last year a student from a PGCC partner school went to Manchester University to study Mandarin, and two DHSG students have applied to continue their studies of Mandarin at university next year.

### **Staffing:**

Initially Mandarin was delivered by a British Council Language Assistant from China through enrichment lessons and school clubs. Then after two years, with the decision to offer Mandarin among the second language choices, the school employed a Mandarin teacher. She taught Mandarin to Year 8 and 9 classes initially and now she teaches groups in Years 8 – 13. As a native Chinese teacher, she was supported by the school in her successful efforts to obtain Qualified Teacher Status in the UK and she now also has the role of liaison teacher within the Confucius Classroom working closely with colleagues in the three other schools. Li Yuemei has shown her commitment to developing her teaching skills further by becoming Principal Moderator for IGCSE Chinese as a Second Language and Team Leader for IGCSE Chinese as a Foreign Language. In addition to support from two of the three Hanban teachers, the school also collaborates with City College Plymouth to offer work experience to native Chinese students who are studying business or teaching in a Foundation course there. Our students have gained tremendously from the extra language and cultural input.

### **Curriculum:**

Year 7 students are offered French or Spanish as their first language and both languages plus German, Latin and Chinese are offered as second languages from Year 8 onwards. With a three year Key Stage 4 Chinese competes with the other four languages and now has parity with them in the Languages Department.

Mandarin has been offered in Key Stage 5 with students working towards an A level with the Edexcel examination board.

The link between PGCC and the two primary schools where a Hanban teacher has taught Mandarin to pupils in Years 3 - 6 for over one year, is proving an excellent motivating factor on both sides. This collaboration will also contribute to the development of Mandarin provision in response to this cross-sector demand.

**Outcomes:**

DHSG has a strong community ethos and has cooperated in and led community-based projects over several years: we led a cross-over project in MFL involving 40+ local schools to produce MFL teaching resources for primaries and in the training of 80+ primary teachers in primary languages. Although as a Specialist Languages College we offered a wide range of languages, the introduction of Chinese indicated a departure from the perceived traditional European languages. However, the students have risen to the challenge and shown enthusiasm in and commitment to their learning, helped in no small measure by the wide range of cultural activities offered through the Confucius Classroom and the Hanban teachers, as well as the opportunities presented by IOE CI - the summer study camp in China and the annual HSBC Mandarin Speaking Competition. Recently a number of DHSG students joined a group of secondary and primary pupils from PGCC to open an International School Award (ISA) ceremony for schools from the South West, held in Plymouth. In the choreographed performance they recited poetry and sang in Chinese and also performed Tai Chi in front of officials from the local council and British Council and representatives from 55 schools within a wide geographical range from Gloucester to Helston in Cornwall. Over ten years ago the school took a decision to provide an interesting and varied curriculum through the inclusion of a language such as Mandarin. Involvement in showcase events such as the ISA ceremony along with the fact that the Mandarin GCSE results this year reflected 100% pass A\*-C, more than justify the value of that decision.