

BULWELL ACADEMY – THE OPEN HOUSE APPROACH

Academic year 2009 - 2010

The Bulwell Academy is a new school formed from two schools in the Bulwell area, both of which had been under special measures. With the new academy and the new building have come new approaches to education and fresh initiatives to excite and motivate the students. Mobility of the members of the local community is low and many young people have little opportunity to travel beyond their immediate environment. So motivating young people about the opportunities of language learning and learning about other cultures is a challenging task.

Early discussions with their Director of Business and Enterprise, Alison Bingham, and their Teaching and Learning Leader for MFL, Germina Jauzelon, revealed a passion and enthusiasm to access any and every opportunity coming their way. Germina describes their attitude to Modern Foreign Languages as ‘moving on from a traditional curriculum by adopting a themed approach to language teaching, with emphasis on cross-curricular, thinking skills, functional skills, enterprise skills and global dimension with community participation.’ In addition to taking up opportunities presented by Business Language Champions, Bulwell has also been proactive in resourcing their own. They particularly like outside speakers to come in to talk to students about how languages have helped them in their career and how they have benefited from languages on a social and personal enrichment level.

During the year, their MFL activity has included the following visits and projects:

- Romain Baudry from the Chamber of Commerce
- Flt. Sgt. Paul Hughes from RAF
- Lynne Chapman – children’s books illustrator (not organised by BLC)
- Dr. Dalida Chouchi – scientific adviser at Boots
- A visit to Boots
- A delegation to the BLC Russia Day event (see separate case study)
- A Linguavision project (a Bulwell initiative)

Romain Baudry is a French student who came to work for 6 months at the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce. He spent time with small groups of students, talking about his passion for languages, his studies and also his work in Scandinavia. The students loved his informal approach and afterwards commented:

- “Languages are important because they help millions of people communicate in this world of different cultures and within the world of business. Language skills are important and sometimes needed for one’s survival.”
- “It is a big advantage to know more than one language because it offers you more choice when getting a job. If you are a person who likes to travel then languages are the thing for you. You will get to know the world and get to know other cultures, which is pretty cool. And the more you know about the world, the better.”



Flt. Sgt. Paul Hughes is an enthusiastic Business Language Champion who visits many schools on our behalf. Whilst disaffected by languages at school, and dyslexic as well, Paul has developed his own techniques for language learning and now speaks Russian, Pashtu and Arabic. He loves

to address large numbers of students and reckons that given an hour, he can convert any teenager to committed linguist! Germina wrote in the thank you letter to him 'It was difficult to remove you from those year 8 students who literally surrounded you at the end of your talk, and this is in my opinion absolute proof of how well you connected with them.'

Dr. Dalida Chouchi is a French national and works as a scientific adviser at Boots, particularly in the area of European patents. It is envisaged that Dalida becomes a longer-term partner for Bulwell. As well running a workshop for the students, Dalida was able to organise a work place visit for a group of students to Boots, particularly showing how languages can help a scientific career. The visit encompassed both laboratories and manufacturing.

Student comments included:

"I found out how many things you need to take into account when creating a new product and especially how you need to think of the safety of everyone involved"

"I was surprised to find out that there are so many people involved in creating an everyday product such as a bottle of shampoo. From the marketing team, the scientists, the production team, the selling team, the packaging and the advertising, everyone needs to participate."



Linguavision is Germina's brainchild and Business Language Champions cannot take any credit for it (unfortunately!). Bulwell's philosophy is to introduce cross-curricular projects that will inspire its students and Germina's concept for this project envisaged that it would encompass not only language but also choreography, technology, concepts of democracy (through the voting), maths (counting the votes), business and enterprise. Business Language Champions was asked to support this project and found suitable 'sponsors' for each of the 5 different languages involved in the project. The aim is to establish long lasting partnerships that not only raise the profile of languages in school, but also offer an insight into the world of work and the skills and attributes one needs to succeed.

There were 15 songs in 5 different languages (French, German, Spanish, Italian and Romanian). The culmination was a performance night of the 5 finalists, to which parents and members of the public were invited. Voting included feeder schools and partner schools in France. As this turned out to be such a complex project, BLCs were eventually not involved during its first year. However, it is planned that this project will be run again, and this time it will be extended to include cultural and language input from BLCs supporting each language.

Germina's advice when implementing a long term project includes:

- win the right people on your side – Senior Management Team buy-in is essential!
- break it down to very clear manageable steps, with clear responsibilities and deadlines
- think of practicalities
- be flexible – a long term project can grow in time and get better and better
- be clear of the essential points of your project, desirable points and what can be considered as a plus

These initiatives are now producing results for Bulwell:

- no more student saying "What do we have to study French for?"
- excellent feedback from students

- getting more students to consider taking up a language for GCSE
- increased participation in lessons
- better relationships with more students

Contacts

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