

Celebrating success in primary Spanish

At Parbold Douglas CE Primary School in Lancashire, Year 6 children mark their achievements in Spanish by taking Asset's externally-assessed tests every May. Every July, the school holds an end-of-year assembly where children are presented with Asset certificates, watched by their parents. Last year, 29 Year 6 children celebrated their success with certificates for skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing at the beginner's (or Breakthrough) stage. Many got the top grade for this level.

The provision of Spanish at Parbold Douglas has expanded in the last couple of years to include all of KS2. Señora (Barbara) Murphy teaches each class from Year 3 upwards for an hour every Thursday. "The children really enjoy learning Spanish and are a pleasure to teach," she commented. Alongside weekly Spanish lessons the school puts on events such as special Spanish days to engage the enthusiasm of its primary language learners.

Señora Murphy was interested in external assessment as she wanted a "formal but unobtrusive" way of giving her pupils credit for what they have achieved.

"We play the Asset tests down. We don't mention them way in advance. They take place during normal lesson time in May. It's not a SAT and we don't want the children to be anxious. Everyone in the class is entered including statemented children, and they all get excellent results. We do have an Asset Spanish Teacher Assessment Pack as well, but we just use it as a practice run before the actual test."

"It's important that children have a record of their achievement in all four skills because we want them to make real progress in all aspects of their language learning. I start with speaking and listening and focus on good pronunciation before looking at sound-spelling links and then progressing on to reading and writing."

Parents receive a letter explaining about Asset tests. Señora Murphy then introduces the tests lightly across the May testing window. "I get the speaking test out of the way first, using the fact that you can do the conversation and presentation parts separately. The children then take a short listening, reading and writing test as part of their lesson time over three weeks."

Señora Murphy also writes to the feeder secondary schools explaining the level of Spanish that an incoming pupil from Parbold Douglas will have. The formal evidence of Asset helps with this.

While the Year 6 pupils have been taking Asset tests at Breakthrough for the last few years, the school is considering whether to enter some of the children for tests at the next stage up (Preliminary) for some of their skills in the future. "We are passionate about preparing the children to be lifelong learners. Getting excellent results is thrilling for them and their parents, and the school is extremely proud of their achievements."