

Evidence of achievement in KS3

In January 2009, all pupils in Year 9 at Worle School in Weston-super-Mare took Asset Languages tests in French.

Deputy Head of Languages, Mrs Jan Mochnacz, explained the thinking behind the approach.

“Ever since languages became optional in KS4, only a small proportion of students continue with the subject to GCSE. One of the problems associated with this is that pupils giving up languages at the end of Year 9 have nothing to show after three years of study. So we started to look for something to provide evidence of achievement. Asset seemed to fit the bill, particularly as we were into our second year of using it with our current Year 11.”

Half the Year 9 pupils – nearly 150 pupils - took Breakthrough Stage tests for their listening and reading skills in French while the other half took the same tests at the higher Preliminary Stage, equivalent to Foundation level GCSE in standard.

Jan continued: “The results were good. The main point was to give kids something positive at the end of KS3 to show for their efforts. They were very keen to know their results and nagged us constantly until we were able to tell them.”

“Getting results with Asset works for those who are dropping languages, and it motivates those who intend to carry on into KS4. There were half a dozen who were genuinely surprised at their success in the subject and who now wish to change KS4 options so they can continue with French.”

“As this method of assessment is skills- rather than topic-based, we didn’t make a fuss of the tests. In fact, we didn’t even tell the pupils in advance. Thus we were able to gain a good idea of how well they were likely to do if they were planning to study a language for GCSE. Those who are stopping can see how they have progressed. Tests in January are convenient for us as the school is geared for mock exams, so we dove-tail the Year 9s in at the end. June is generally a quieter time after the Year 11s have gone.”

Worle School uses Asset Languages as a means of assessing and motivating pupils in Year 9 and KS4. Some pupils in Year 11, for example, are using Asset to provide the accreditation of a second language alongside taking a GCSE in their first foreign language. Some are doing both French and Spanish Asset at different levels according to their ability and KS3 studies. Asset is just one of the exciting initiatives used by Worle School to encourage more pupils to study languages.

“In Year 11 we have pupils taking the tests who range in ability from Level 1 to level 12,” said Jan. “The course is tailor-made to assist students to achieve their potential. Some who switched from French to Spanish after KS3 have recently opted to take French tests as well, to see if they can achieve a reasonable level in both foreign languages, instead of just one. Asset is a terrific tool for really personalised learning.”