

Hola from Liverpool - primary school success in Spanish

Two primary schools in Liverpool are blazing a trail with the use of external assessment to support the teaching of Spanish.

This May, a group of Year 6 pupils from St Sebastian's Catholic Primary School and Arnot Primary School in Liverpool became some of the youngest children in the country to achieve Asset qualifications for their skills in Spanish.

34 children – 17 from each school – were externally assessed in listening, reading and speaking Spanish at Breakthrough level in the March testing window.

Sheila Grady, the advisory teacher at both schools, chose to use Asset Languages for several reasons: "because the children have been receiving three Spanish lessons a week, one lesson delivered by the class teacher, one by the foreign language assistant and one by myself and I felt it was time for the children to be externally assessed to show the level they had reached."

"I think this will help with the children's transition to Secondary. They will have a certificate to show their language teachers the level they have reached in each skill."

"It is important to set targets for the children and give them challenges in their learning."
"In our teaching the focus has been mainly on speaking and listening and Asset offers the opportunity to choose which skill the children will be tested in."

Sheila continued: "This year our children did not take the writing tests as I felt that they were not prepared sufficiently to take it. Next year we will be looking at our teaching methods and considering the possibility of incorporating more teaching of writing skills into our language lesson."

She acknowledged that this type of assessment motivates her pupils. "I am pleased that the efforts of these children can be rewarded in this way. Every child has received a certificate in at least one of the tests, most received a certificate in all three. This is thrilling for them and the schools and their families are extremely proud of their achievements."

Special arrangements are made to keep things simple for primary age children taking Asset tests. Children taking listening and reading tests mark their answers directly onto the question papers. Secondary school and older candidates fill in separate answer sheets which are marked optically.