

## **Rewarding learners from the Chinese community in Milton Keynes**

The Chinese community in and around Milton Keynes is estimated to be about ten thousand strong. In 1988, the Milton Keynes Chinese School was opened, motivated by local parents' wishes for their children to inherit Chinese language and culture. The school is run as an independent, voluntary, non-profit making, non-political and non-religious organisation. It provides language classes every Sunday morning for young people from the age of 5 up to GCSE and A level standard, as well as classes for adult students. The languages taught are Mandarin, Cantonese and simplified and traditional forms of Chinese writing. The school later expanded to include a community centre offering a wider range of cultural activities such as music, cookery, and arts and crafts.

"During 11 years of studying Chinese, the only recognised qualification available before Asset was the GCSE, explained Chor Leong, Chairman of the School. "Some of our pupils may move on and not take a GCSE which is a pity if they have been learning a language for many years but have no formal qualification to prove it. It is difficult to judge the academic level of individual pupils without national tests and pupils may not be motivated to study over a long period. I think Asset resolves all these problems. It not only encourages pupils to study continuously but it builds up their confidence through a manageable award structure."

"For the time being, we use the class years to match the level of Asset Languages; Year 3 equates to the end of Breakthrough Stage, Year 6 for Preliminary and Year 9 for Intermediate. Cantonese and Mandarin are taught in separate classes to different pupils. We also find Simplified Chinese useful as the script is much easier to write, particularly for our youngest pupils."

"We are able to enter pupils for Asset tests in a mix of these languages in three skills this summer. I expect them to do well in all the areas, especially reading and listening. Victor, one of the pupils who is taking Preliminary said that the listening and reading tests were easy to answer with the writing tasks because they acknowledge his Chinese ability, and best of all, he will receive the OCR certificates which are recognised by schools."