



Literacy through Classics Project

Information for Teachers and Parents

The Project

The Iris Project is a charity which brings Classics to primary and secondary schools in the UK. As part of its mission, it runs a very successful Literacy through Latin project, in which students from various universities (including Oxford University and King's College London) teach Latin to local primary and secondary school pupils, specifically with the aim of improving young people's literacy skills. The national Literacy through Latin project has recently been nominated for the prestigious EU Language Label 2013, which demonstrates the impact of the project, not only nationwide but also internationally.

In October 2011, the Department of History and Classics (Swansea University) started working together with the Iris Project, and we set up the first Literacy through Latin project in Wales. We piloted the project in a local primary school with sixty-five pupils between 9 and 11 years old. The feedback was very positive, and two more schools have now joined the project. Since then, more than 600 pupils have been taught by 150 students in 13 schools. We also extended the project to include ancient history, not just ancient languages.



Latin basketball

The cost of the project is borne by Swansea University and external funders – there is no cost for the schools. We reimburse all travel costs of our student volunteers, as well as all the teaching materials. Our students are trained and DBS-checked (former CRB)

Why Latin?

Latin might seem like an odd subject to choose: it's a dead language, and doesn't seem to have any immediate relevance in modern Wales. However, the literacy levels of young people are among the worst in Western Europe (you can find information on this in the 2009 and 2012 PISA reports). In 2013, the Estyn report established that 40% of pupils start secondary school with reading skills below their actual age and 20% are functionally illiterate. As well as this, the recent publication of national GCSE results has revealed that the educational gap between Wales and the rest of the UK at the end of secondary school is widening.

Studies done in other countries suggest that learning Latin can actually help improve literacy levels of young people. In the USA, the Educational Testing Service has revealed that Latin students consistently outperform all other students on the verbal portion of the SAT. Another US study has shown that Latin even helps with math solving abilities and gives pupils an advantage in terms of reading age. (See <http://www.bolchazy.com/al/latadv.htm>)



Dressing a Roman soldier

The way Latin is taught by our students is aimed particularly at improving the literacy levels of young people in Wales – this is a new approach. We focus on connecting Latin with English (as approximately 60% of all English vocabulary is derived from Latin), and also Welsh. Our activities are specifically designed to fit in with the KS2/3 curriculum and the government's National Literacy and Numeracy Framework.

Above all, all our activities are fun and age-appropriate. Don't imagine pupils sitting still and listening for hours! We organize a lot of physical activities (Latin basketball and dance video), act out ancient Roman stories and create new ones, and sing songs. There is no pressure on pupils whatsoever; through play, we aim to get young people to think about languages and how they might be used.

Pupils have an option of doing an OCR exam at the end of year six (provided they have done two years of Latin), but this is to be done *only* if pupils are keen to do so, and in coordination with teachers and parents. In order to monitor the impact of Latin teaching on literacy skills in Wales, we do quantitative and qualitative testing each year.

All our courses tie in with the Key Stage Curriculum, the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework, and aspects of a school's Estyn report (in particular 1.1.4: skills; 2.1.1 meeting the needs of learners, employers and community; 2.1.2 provision for skills, and 3.3.1 strategic partnerships).

All our lesson plans and resources are uploaded onto our website: www.ltlresources.weebly.com.



Halloween spells

Pupil feedback on Latin classes:

- I loved every single lesson
- I liked the mock test because I like being challenged and learning new things
- I liked learning the Christmas songs in Latin
- The Latin class I found most exciting was the lesson where we looked at the first Harry Potter book in Latin, English and Welsh.
- I liked the last lesson before Easter because of the song and the Easter egg hunt.
- We had to write fairy tales in English but add Latin words that we know in English and we watched videos.
- I liked the songs because I now know 'Reach for the stars' in Latin.
- Learning about the verbs: past tense and the future tense.
- All of the Latin songs were very helpful to remember the words and all we were focusing on; I enjoy all lessons.
- I have told my friends, close family and distant family about Latin. I tell them about how fun it is and I compare it to other languages with my sister who is learning Spanish and French.

Year 3/4 curriculum: the Romans

We also offer the Gods and Gladiators curriculum to Y3-4 pupils at local schools. We use our own resources which can be found here: <http://ltresources.weebly.com/gods-and-gladiators.html>. Students teach 1,5 hours each week. Teachers have commented on the ability to use the students' subject knowledge to further their own and increase their ability to help pupils progress. We focus on literacy and – to a lesser extent – numeracy. Pupil feedback demonstrates its effectiveness, and also the great connection made between students and pupils:

- 99% of pupils were very happy with the classes, learning about the Romans, and doing exercises. 100% of pupils were happy with their student teacher.
- Asked what pupils enjoyed the most, they responded:
 - The food :-)
 - Making owls
 - I have enjoyed having you from the last ten weeks thank you – from me I will miss you bye :-)
 - I enjoyed you coming to visit
 - I felt happy. I will miss you
 - Making bread
 - Asked who pupils talked to about their experience, pupils responded: 'Miss you' and 'I told all my friends'

Teacher feedback: "My children are already missing the students every Tuesday!" and "The lesson went really well. The children really enjoyed and are already looking forward to next week judging by their comments as they were leaving! I hope all the students enjoyed, I think we wore them out! :-)"



Meeting Romans and Celts

What projects can we organize in your school?

The Literacy through Classics project can be brought to schools in various formats:

- The most common format are weekly classes brought to pupils by our students: there are approximately 10 classes per term;
- We have also started an ancient Greek project, in which our students can again teach up to 30 pupils an introduction to ancient Greek (again designed to improve literacy skills) and the ancient Greek world;
- We have experts on various aspects of antiquity in our department (including ancient Egypt!). If you would like one of us to come and talk to your pupils, feel free to get in touch.
- We also organise schools' days in the university, where you can learn about lots of different aspects of antiquity.
- If you as parent or teacher would like to learn Latin, Ancient Greek, or Hieroglyphs, feel free to contact us about summer courses, both relaxed beginners courses (Ancient Languages in the Park: <http://swwclassicalassociation.weebly.com/ancient-languages-in-the-park.html>) and a two-week intensive course (<http://www.swansea.ac.uk/artsandhumanities/hc/summerschoolinancientlanguages/>).

How to get involved

If you would like your school/your child's school to get involved in the project, or would like us to come and have a chat with you about how we can work together with your school, feel free to email Dr Evelien Bracke, the Project Coordinator, at e.bracke@swansea.ac.uk.

More information about the project and its partners can be found here:

1. Lots of photos of project can be found on the Facebook page of the SWW Classical Association: https://www.facebook.com/pages/South-West-Wales-Classical-Association/121485431289104?id=121485431289104&sk=photos_stream (Feel free to 'like' us if you are interested in getting updates on our projects)
2. www.ltlresources.weebly.com is a website created by the students containing all our resources (work in progress).
3. The Iris Project: <http://irisproject.org.uk/index.php/projects/literacy-through-latin/55-south-west-wales-latin>
4. South West Wales Classical Association: <http://swwclassicalassociation.weebly.com/>
5. Cymru Wales Classics Hub: <http://cymruwalesclassicshub.weebly.com/>



Triple Literacy: Latin, English, and Welsh

About the Project Coordinator

Dr Evelien Bracke is Employability and Schools Liaison Officer of the History and Classics Department (Swansea University). She has set up the South West Wales Literacy through Classics Project in collaboration with the Iris Project, and designs an innovative MFL-based approach to Latin teaching. She is also the Secretary of the South West Wales Classical Association branch, organizes events (e.g. the Ancient Languages in the Park project) and school workshops and long-term projects on Classics and History. In 2013, Evelien got awarded a Distinguished Teaching Award, which highlights her commitment to the teaching of young people. Her email address is e.bracke@swansea.ac.uk.

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