



Deep Dive Questions for MFL Subject Leaders with example answers for schools that use the iLanguages KS2 Schemes of work

What are your main roles and responsibilities as subject leader for MFL?

I lead on the MFL curriculum, designing and implementing the Scheme of Work and resources. I quality assure teaching and learning and support colleagues teaching French to ensure that it is consistent across classes in the same year group and across different year groups. I ensure that an effective assessment system is in place that colleagues can use and that assessment decisions are moderated and accurate. I support colleagues to ensure that any training needs are provided for. I also lead on transition to secondary school and meet with language teachers from the two main schools that ours feeds into.

Can you explain the 2-3 key priorities you are working on this year as MFL subject leader?

My key priorities for this year are, firstly, to ensure that French **phonics** are taught effectively and consistently. It was identified in a subject visit last year that children's pronunciation was poor and they lacked confidence in speaking, as we weren't teaching phonics systematically. We've now had training on how to do this, I've implemented a new Scheme of Work which includes systematic phonics teaching across Y3 to Y6 and the resources to go with it, so colleagues are confident in how to do this. I'll be checking that this is taking place through lesson visits and listening to children speak French. The **impact** will be that children can apply the rules of French phonics to any language they read out loud, and their pronunciation and confidence in speaking the language should significantly improve. My second priority is to ensure that effective **assessment** is in place. I've introduced a new 'Age related expectations' assessment document and I'll be working with colleagues to support them in making accurate assessment decisions, through providing sample answers and joint moderation with another school. The impact of this is that we will have reliable, consistent, externally moderated assessment data that can be used for future planning and to help children make even better progress.

[It is sensible to be aware of what Ofsted's priorities are when doing a Deep dive in MFL and if you fall short in any of these areas, to make them a priority for your school. You don't need to have everything perfect, but you do need to show that you know where your shortcomings are and have a plan in place to address them and always, always mention impact!]

How did you design your curriculum?

I researched what was available commercially and I was looking in particular for a Scheme of Work that fulfilled the three pillars of language learning, **phonics, vocabulary and grammar**. I also wanted something that was appropriate for teachers who are not specialists and needed the support of voiceovers in French to help with their own accent and pronunciation. I use the iLanguages Schemes for Y3 to Y6 as this fulfils all these criteria. The scheme presents language in small steps, and allows for lots of recycling and retrieval practice so that the language goes into children's long term memory. It also has a wide variety of different resources, from songs, stories, video clips and apps that support it, so children can continue to practise the language at home.

[Note it's fine to use a commercially produced Scheme of Work but you need to show the reasons why you chose it and that you understand its underlying principles well and ideally make reference to the three pillar, phonics, vocabulary and grammar.]

Notes from Ofsted Primary MFL training materials:

Where there are no languages specialists, teachers have access to detailed schemes of learning and sequenced resources. Support must be available to help teachers address any gaps that exist in subject teaching methodology. Support is available to help teachers maintain a good level of ability in the target language. Specialist teachers share their expertise with others so that provision does not deteriorate should these staff leave.

Does you follow the National Curriculum?

My curriculum exceeds the National Curriculum. It covers everything in the KS2 Programme of Study, so that it enables children to listen attentively, engage in conversations, explore the patterns and sounds of French through phonics, speak in sentences, read and it covers a wide range of vocabulary. It also ensures that pupils cover the basic grammar such as high frequency verbs. However, our curriculum goes further than 'write phrases from memory, and adapt these to create new sentences, to express ideas clearly' as by Y5 and Y6 children are able to write at text level, not just sentence level, and they can read longer texts. Also, we go further than teaching just basic grammar, as in Y5 children learn the simple future tense and in Y6 they can use the past tense.

[Note if your curriculum does exceed the KS2 Programme of Study, make sure you can give some specific examples of how it does and in which years.]

What is your model of progression in MFL?

It is recommended that you show the inspector a simple one page progression document such as the one below and talk the inspector through it. A good progression document should show progression in the three pillars of language learning – phonics, vocabulary and grammar.

Notes from Ofsted Primary MFL training materials:

Lessons should focus on developing greater knowledge Over time there is a focus on: learning words that can be used in a wide variety of situations; manipulating simple language; moving on from rote learning; extending writing and speaking in line with expectations at key stage 2; engaging with longer written and spoken texts; engaging in simple conversations.

Phonics progression

French Phonemes taught and sequence	
Y3	un, u, silent z, i, in, eu, th, j, a, short e
Y4	long e, an/en, r, ch, ou, on, qu
Y5	oui, oi, silent h, rule about silent letters at the end of words
Y6	Revision of the above as required

Notes from Ofsted Primary MFL training materials:

They are introduced gradually with appropriate practice and revisited regularly. Sound-spelling links are more complex in French than in Spanish.

Vocabulary progression

Vocabulary taught and suggested sequence	
Y3	Greetings, classroom instructions, animals, number 1-5, colours, numbers 1-10, connectives, Easter traditions, days of the week, numbers 1-15
Y4	Parts of the body, food, opinions, numbers 1-31, maths, months, dates, personal descriptions, family, clothes, Christmas traditions
Y5	Sports, hobbies, opinions (wider range), weather, traditional fable, numbers 32-60, school: subjects and description, items in classroom, transport, West Africa/ Mexico project
Y6	Telling the time, daily routine, countries, houses, opinions, rooms in house, furniture, places in the town, buying food from the market, ordering food in a café/ restaurant, April Fool's Day

Grammar progression

French Grammar points taught and sequence	
Y3	Gender, adjective word order, <i>le/la/les & un/une/des</i> , <i>je suis</i> and <i>j'ai</i> (HFV), <i>je voudrais</i> (first person <i>je</i>)
Y4	The negative (<i>Je n'aime pas</i>), adjectival agreements, <i>il/elle est</i> , <i>il/elle a</i> , <i>il/elle voudrait</i> (third person), possessive adjectives (<i>mon, ma, mes</i>)
Y5	HFV <i>avoir, être</i> and <i>aller</i> (<i>je, il, elle, nous</i>), possessive adjectives (<i>son, sa, ses</i>), prepositions, simple future tense
Y6	HFV <i>avoir, être</i> and <i>aller</i> (full conjugation), <i>je peux</i> + infinitive, perfect (past tense)

Notes from Ofsted Primary MFL training materials :

Pupils should be taught to understand and use simple grammar so that they manipulate simple sentences not only recite them. (For example, with guidance being able to translate simple sentences such as 'the table is blue, the chair is green', in addition to simple rehearsed question and answer exchanges.) Curriculum plans should consider what pupils need to produce and understand in Year 6 and build step by step towards this grammatically.

How do you monitor that your Schemes of Work are being implemented effectively?

I ensure that criteria for success are very clear to colleagues and children, and I visit lessons regularly, speaking to children in lessons and listening to them speak French. I look in particular to see whether effective pedagogy is in place, such as the use of **models** (both oral and written), effective **checking for understanding** and re-teaching if necessary, opportunities for **independent practice** when appropriate, **sufficient challenge** and also a **high success rate**. I will check the work of **disadvantaged** children and children with **SEND** to ensure that they are not falling behind and, where appropriate, that teaching has been effectively differentiated for them. I also look at their

work and compare children's work across classes in the same year and across different years to check that they are making progress through the curriculum. I speak regularly to teachers to check that they are implementing the curriculum and I try to help them if they are having any problems.

[Note, it's sensible to mention here about the sort of pedagogy you'd expect to see, and reference has been made here to some of the Rosenshine principles. You should also mention pupil groups – disadvantaged and SEND and the two key ones but you could also mention boys/girls and mid, low and high prior attaining pupils.]

How do you assess learning in MFL?

We use an 'Age related expectations' model, whereby teachers assess children regularly during lessons. This document covers the four language learning skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing but also covers grammar knowledge separately and differentiates for example with children's writing if they have done it completely independently or with some support such as a sentence builder. I also ensure that **regular moderation** takes place so that assessment decisions across the school in French are consistent, and we also **moderate externally** with another local school using the same Scheme of Work. We do have a set of end of year summative assessments that we use at the end of each year to make a final assessment decision about children's attainment in French.

[Note that moderation is important to mention so that assessment decisions are consistent. It is even better if you can show that you are moderating externally from time to time.]

Notes from Ofsted Primary MFL training materials:

Assessments should check the content in the schemes of work. Frequent low stakes testing should be used to build memory through repeated recall. Assessment should check pupils' ability to produce sentences and manipulate simple structures as well as their understanding and production of vocabulary. Assessments should avoid giving too much credit to rote-memorisation of simple fixed phrases at the expense of capacity to recall learnt vocabulary and grammar to construct novel sentences.

Assessments include testing of speaking, listening, reading and writing.

How do you ensure that pupils retain knowledge? How do you know that this works?

The Scheme of Work that we use has a spiral approach so that grammar such as verbs and adjectives and vocabulary are revisited both across a series of lessons and each year. We use lots of songs which have been shown to help reinforce language in the memory, vocabulary learning games and sometimes mini vocabulary tests to support **retrieval practice**. We know that children need to have accessed a word between six to 14 times before it sticks in the **long term memory**, and so we try to maximise the number of times that children come across a word. For example, they only have French for one 40 minute slot per week, but the class teacher, when taking the register throughout the rest of the week, will expect the children to give a simple sentence in French which practices the particular vocabulary items or grammar point that they are currently learning. Also if there is a spare five minutes during the week, the teacher will play a French song that children learned perhaps a month ago, to keep the language fresh in their minds and to support **spaced practice**. We encourage parents to download the app, which enables children to practise the same language at home. We know that our methods are effective as children show us when they speak and write in French that they remember vocabulary and language structures taught in the past, not just what has been recently taught.

[Note that reference is made here to retrieval practice, spaced practice and long term memory, showing the inspector that the teacher has knowledge of this and implements it in the curriculum.]

Notes from Ofsted Primary MFL training materials:

Teachers should ensure that pupils have learnt previous material well, so that when moving on their working memory is not overloaded by grappling with both the basics and new material.

Teaching and planning ensure that pupils remember what has been taught previously. Progress is considered in terms of what has been learned in the longer term. Leaders do not overload the curriculum with vocabulary or grammar but ensure that pupils remember what has been learned. Teachers plan strategically to revisit content so that pupils remember it long term.

Can you tell me what I will see in lessons?

In lessons you will see children who enjoy learning French and are happy to speak it. There will be examples of retrieval practice, perhaps in the form of games, stories, songs and a focus on phonics, vocabulary and grammar (but not all at the same time!). Children of all ages and abilities are well motivated to take part in activities as they see French as something very positive which they are successful at, due to the effective scaffolding and challenge that is provided. Teachers are mixed in terms of their confidence in speaking the language and those who are not as confident use the native speaker voiceovers in the resources, so that children have a good model of spoken language to imitate.

[Note – make sure that what you describe will actually be seen!]

Can you tell me what I will see in pupils' work?

As children only have 40 minutes per week and they do a lot of **oral work**, which can't be recorded in books, you will mainly see **written work** at sentence level in Years 3 and 4, developing to more complex language and shorted texts in Years 5 and 6. You will see children being able to write simple opinions and use the 'I' form of the verb in Year 3, as well as to write sentences using correct word order with adjectives. In Year 4 children will write more complex sentences with subordinate clause as they are able to give reasons for their opinions, as well as a broader range of vocabulary. In Year 5 children continue to broaden their vocabulary and can write sentences using both the present and the simple future tense. In Year 6 children can write more complex descriptions of their home and daily routine, using comparatives and they also start to write simple phrases in the past tense.

[It's important for you to do a work scrutiny first and make sure that what you describe will be seen!]

What does greater depth in MFL look like?

In MFL greater depth involves children being able to take part in longer, spontaneous **conversations** with each other, with accurate pronunciation and intonation. Children are able to **read** and understand longer texts and **listen** to and understand longer items of spoken French. They are able to **write** independently across a variety of different topics such as family, free time activities, personal descriptions, the town, daily routine and the time, their home and food. They can also use the present, future and past tenses and translate sentences with different tenses accurately.

[NB it's important here to make reference to the four language skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing.]

How effective is your curriculum for all pupils?

We know that the curriculum is effective as the vast majority of pupils, 95% make at least expected progress and 45% exceed expected progress. The 5% of pupils who do not make expected progress are those with serious SEND needs, but they are given appropriate support and scaffolding. We know this is accurate as we moderate externally.

[NB it's useful to give specific data here and to have a commentary ready about it.]

Do you have any underachieving groups?

Some children with serious SEND needs are underachieving. Sometimes these children are taken out of French lessons to have one to one support in maths and English, which we understand the importance of. If this is the case, I encourage parents to download the language learning app that supports our scheme, as there are many engaging, interactive activities that children can do at home to ensure that they do not fall too far behind.

Although boys achieve well in French, they lag behind the girls, as 65% of girls exceed expectations while only 25% of boys do. We understand that this is consistent with the national picture but we do everything we can to encourage boys to memorise the language, through language learning games and we have recently strongly encouraged the use of the app and we talk about this in lessons as there's a competitive element to it, which the boys in particular appreciate.

[NB it's important to know which are your underachieving groups and to be able to say what you are doing about it.]

Notes from Ofsted Primary MFL training materials:

Teachers should ensure that they are aware of the prior knowledge necessary to understand new language or structures.

Teachers need to ensure that pupils who find it difficult to learn languages understand the basics before moving on. Where necessary the components of the subject curriculum should be carefully identified and broken down into manageable chunks. For example, when learning the perfect tense, pupils need to have a strong grasp of auxiliary verbs (to have and to be, for example).

How does MFL support the development of SMSC and cultural capital?

Children are taught to accept and embrace other languages and cultures through the teaching of French. They are also taught the religious beliefs of the people in French-speaking countries. Regarding moral development, children are encouraged to show empathy and understanding to others. Stereotypes and intolerance are challenged through the teaching of language and culture. The French schemes of work identify and explore many moral issues in a global society, such as equality of lifestyle within a global context (comparing the UK to less wealthy countries, such as Senegal). Socially, children are encouraged to work independently in lessons and proactively use French in the classroom, through pair work, co-operative learning techniques or group work. Children are often differentiated in groups of varied abilities to encourage social interaction with others in the class with whom they may not usually interact. They are encouraged to experiment with language and learn from their mistakes and there is a supportive environment in French lessons where mistakes are seen as learning opportunities, rather than as failures.

Cultural development and cultural awareness are fundamental in language learning. Children are encouraged to embrace 'difference' at all stages of their linguistic development and accept ideas

which may be 'strange' to them, as culturally significant, for example the fact that the tooth fairy is a mouse in France and that fishes are stuck onto people's back on April Fool's Day. Children are encouraged to discuss and challenge stereotypes within a national and international context.

In our 'Age-related expectations' document we also have a section showing how children make progress in their knowledge of cultural capital in languages.

How do you develop staff?

We audit staff training needs through self-assessment and lesson visits and provide bespoke training in the pedagogy of language teaching for those who require it, both within school and as part of a cluster of primary schools with input from an MFL Lead practitioner from our feeder secondary school. We also give colleagues the opportunity to improve their French through funded French courses with the Institut Français or online.

[NB it's important to mention both training in language teaching pedagogy and developing competence in the foreign language.]

Questions for teachers of languages

How did your lesson fit into the sequence of learning?

This lesson followed on from a lesson which revised how to give opinions in the 'I' form that children learnt in Year 3. We revised the main opinion phrases they had previously learnt, *j'aime, je déteste, je n'aime pas*, using the language of sports and hobbies that they learnt in the previous two lessons. I then took it a step further by asking them to give me a reason for their opinion. This involved learning the word for because, *parce que*, which is new, but the phrase following it *c'est* (it's) plus an adjective like *intéressant* was something they'd already covered in Year 3, so it involved some previously learnt language and some new language using a connective and forming a more complex sentence. It's important for children to be able to say and write more complex sentences for them to make progress and these opinions with reasons can be used in different contexts like giving opinions about food and school subjects which come up later in the year and in Year 5.

Talk me through staff development/CPD.

We sometimes meet with other teachers from three local primary schools and have some training from an MFL teacher from the local secondary school. We've looked at how to teach French phonics and grammar and also how to help children memorise language. It's been useful and I've implemented some of these ideas into my practice. The MFL Subject Lead also observes me teaching French once per term and I find her feedback about how I can improve really useful.

What do you do to help students retain knowledge?

I use lots of repetition and language learning games such as slap the board and games like snakes and ladders. I know that children need to access a word several times before they remember it so I'm always trying to think of ways to make them use it during the week, like during registration. If I have a spare five minutes of so I will play a French song that they've learnt before to help bring back the vocabulary. I also encourage them to use the app which practices the vocabulary over and over again and I give a weekly prize to the person who's at the top of the leader board on the app, to encourage them to use it.

What are the biggest barriers to learning?

I think it's the lack of time. I would love to have more time to teach French, perhaps twice a week rather than once, as it's hard to learn a language, and little and often rather than once a week is meant to be best. However, we do have a lot to fit into the curriculum, so I understand the constraints. I try to mitigate for this by doing the things I said earlier, drip feeding it into other parts of the week.

How do you know if they retain knowledge?

I know this from the children's responses in lessons and also because I bring up old language that they've perhaps learnt a month ago or longer, when they will have started forgetting it. I also often do some very specific activities to check understanding and retention, such as asking them to translate sentences into French using mini whiteboards. This way, there's no hiding place. They all have to answer, and I make them all lift up their boards at the same time so they can't copy each other's. Translation is a very specific task and it's a great way to check understanding as it tests grammar knowledge, for example verb conjugation and adjective position and agreement, and also vocabulary knowledge and spellings. If I find that some children keep getting certain things wrong, I'll set the others off on an independent task and reteach that part.

A final word

Preparing for an Ofsted Deep Dive can be stressful, and practice, practice, practice is all important! It's a good idea to ask for someone to 'put you through your paces', ideally someone you don't know, to see how you perform. If it's not great the first time, practise again – you will improve. It's also important that what the Subject leader says about French triangulates with what the colleagues teaching French say, so you need to make sure that you're all 'singing from the same hymn sheet' with regard to your pedagogy, your thinking around curriculum and how you plan for children to retain knowledge and your assessment methodology. Finally, and most importantly, all of this is a waste of time if it's not observed in lessons and in children's work. This is where the rubber really hits the road and if the planning and delivery of the curriculum are not right, this will quickly be shown up.