



Modern Languages: Spanish

Why learn languages at primary school?

Languages are part of the cultural richness of our society and the world in which we live and work. Learning languages contributes to mutual understanding, a sense of global citizenship and personal fulfilment. Pupils learn to appreciate different countries, cultures, communities and people. By making comparisons, they gain insight into their own culture and society. The ability to understand and communicate in another language is a lifelong skill for education, employment and leisure in this country and throughout the world.

Learning languages gives pupils opportunities to develop their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills and to express themselves with increasing confidence, independence and creativity. They explore the similarities and differences between other languages and English and learn how language can be manipulated and applied in different ways. The development of communication skills, together with understanding of the structure of language, lay the foundations for future study of other languages and support the development of literacy skills in a pupil's own language.*

*www.education.gov.uk

Why learn Spanish?

- Spanish is the second most natively spoken language in the world.
- Spanish is the primary language of 20 countries worldwide.
- Spanish is the second most studied language and second language in communication.
- Every year the number of people studying Spanish grows significantly.*

*Instituto Cervantes.

Why learn Spanish through drama?

- Young learners acquire language through exposure to, and meaningful communication in, the language; not through textbooks focussing on rules and patterns.
- Interesting, exciting and creative activities help build a love and enjoyment of the language.
- Cultural understanding, hard to pick up from a textbook, can be achieved through interactive activities that are designed to make the student think, make decisions and solve problems.

Why learn Spanish with Square Circle Arts?

- We offer a broad, balanced, imaginative and engaging topic-based approach to the language, applied across the curriculum.
- We have links with South American schools, providing exciting opportunities for intercultural and interlinguistic exchange.
- We have been using drama as an educational tool in primary schools to teach a range of subjects for over ten years.
- Our lead facilitator is bilingual in Spanish and English and has taught and facilitated drama projects in South America for four years.

Our aims

- To motivate and inspire pupils, creating a love of languages from an early age.

Pupil learning objectives

- To develop an understanding of how language works and how to manipulate it.
- To develop the necessary skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing to be able to communicate effectively.
- To learn a range of vocabulary, basic grammar and correct pronunciation.
- To express simple ideas, thoughts, experiences and feelings through speaking in sentences.
- To appreciate the richness and diversity of other cultures and develop an international outlook.

Aims for teaching staff

- To acquire the confidence, skills, ideas and strategies to be able to plan creatively in the future.

How we do it

- We use techniques which follow the pupils' interests, where the child is placed in the role of expert and is encouraged to build up their knowledge and form their own opinions, thus increasing their problem-solving skills and ability to work independently.
- We build up pupils' confidence in expressing themselves and trying new things.
- We use interactive tools, games and exercises which encourage effective communication, including listening skills and working together.

Further information

- We will adapt the sessions to the level of the pupils, for example, if they are complete beginners or have already had some exposure to the language.
- We can link in with your weekly planning (e.g. in areas of grammar and vocabulary) if given these in advance to incorporate in our own planning.
- We fill out regular detailed session plans outlining activity aims, student learning objectives AND links to the National Curriculum, which will be submitted to you in advance.

Please see our main guide for further details, including: length, duration and frequency of sessions and prices.

Remember: We offer a free taster session before you commit to more sessions.

Project outline

Key Stage 2

Students will be immersed in the Spanish language from the start in a fun, interactive and stimulating way. They will work in groups, each of which will be given a Spanish-speaking country to discover, ending in a GRAN TUR Y FIESTA LATINA in which they will present their country to the whole school. While each session will focus on one or two main banks of vocabulary (e.g. colours, food and drink, likes and dislikes) or areas of grammar (e.g. questions, commands) – using drama games and exercises, songs or rhymes – the heart of the project is driven by communication between our pupils and children from a school in South America.* We anticipate a weekly exchange of questions and tasks set between the two schools, which will inform the line of enquiry of each subsequent session. Communication will be via email, video link or podcast and will give the pupils the chance to interact face-to-face with children their age, thus contextualising and bringing meaning to their learning, whilst comparing and contrasting their cultures. We would encourage the relationship between the two schools to continue beyond the life of the project.

Examples of National Curriculum attainment targets met:

Listening and responding level 2: Pupils show that they understand short phrases presented in a familiar context.

Speaking level 2: Pupils give short, simple responses to what they see and hear. They name and describe people, places and objects.

Reading and responding level 1: Pupils show that they understand single words presented in clear script in a familiar context.

**We are currently in talks with one Chilean school about setting up formal links. The format has not yet been agreed and will depend on how the project develops in the UK.*

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Key Stage 1

"Children will get a love of learning languages if they get the chance to learn them younger. The government's talking about seven. I would encourage schools to start teaching languages younger than seven." The shadow education secretary, Stephen Twigg. We can offer simple, fun and interactive sessions to younger children, embracing their capacity for - and building up their interest and understanding of – languages, through games, songs and rhymes. We can use the links with our South American partner school to present exciting opportunities for exchange. Please ask for more details.

What we ask of you

- The creation of space in your classroom (i.e. tables to one side) and the occasional use of the hall.
- The reading and writing activities that we plan, including research, are limited in order to make the best use of our time in the classroom. However, there is plenty of scope for further reading and writing, as well as interactive activities, for teachers to pursue outside of these sessions. We will make a list of possible extensions after each session, from which the teacher is of course free to take what they want and add their own ideas.

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The way we work

Hi, I'm Shuna, Director and lead facilitator here at Square Circle Arts. I currently design and deliver all the Spanish through Drama sessions. Allow me to tell you a bit about myself.

I 'acquired' Spanish by travelling to Spain on my own to stay with a family with little English, every summer from the age of 12. When I sat down to my first proper lesson at Sixth Form, I spoke with fluency but understood none of the grammar or spelling. This was quickly picked up as I had a deep understanding and love of the language. I have, since then, been very interested in the acquisition and learning of languages.

When my son Sam turned one earlier this year, I grew fascinated by the way in which he started understanding words and then full sentences at an exponential rate. Recently, when he reached 17 months of age, I woke up one morning and began speaking in Spanish to him. Although I speak it fluently and knew the value of bringing him up bilingually, I had hesitated to do so because Spanish isn't my mother tongue. I had worried that I wouldn't be able to be consistent and would revert back to English all too often.

However, that morning, I was intrigued as to how well he adapted and accepted this shift in language. He didn't question that the 'car' was now an 'auto', that 'duck' was now 'pato'. They still made the same noises (brrruum, and quack), still looked the same, still worked the same. It didn't seem out of the ordinary for him that a certain action or sign (our sign for 'tired' for example) should be accompanied by a different sound. I started noticing and examining the way I interacted with him linguistically even more closely.

When we speak to very young children in English or any other tongue, we accompany our words with actions and onomatopoeic sounds, we use tuneful, rhythmic sound patterns, repetition and constant positive

reinforcement, we show, we point, we back things up, we 'do' as we talk, we talk as they 'do'. They derive meaning from our tone as much as from the actual shape of the word. It may seem obvious, but we're 'communicating'. As a storyteller to children with special needs, this has always been very familiar to me.

Within 2 hours, Sam had learned to respond to up to 10 new words in Spanish. A month later, and I haven't reverted back to English, Sam is well on his way to understanding two languages equally, and the few words he says are in both English and Spanish.

Now, Sam was very young and felt comfortable and confident with me at home. He hadn't learned to expect things to be, or accept the world in, one particular way and so was adaptable to change. He had unquestioning faith in me, his mum. The older we get the less accepting and trusting we are of change. It puts us out of our comfort zone.

All this observation has helped to shape the way we design our sessions at Square Circle Arts. We believe that languages, rather than being 'taught' in a classroom, are better off being acquired through 'doing', experiencing, and being immersed in that language in a stimulating, exciting, positive and meaningful environment. Grammar and structure can come later and, as a result, more easily. We try to put pupils at ease and in their comfort zone – not out of it – by building their confidence up so that they are able to adapt to a different way of looking at and commenting on the world around them. We teach them to communicate.

You can find more information about Shuna's experience and training in the main guide issued to your school, and on our website: www.squarecirclearts.co.uk/about.php