

Bringing language and culture to the younger generation

Qi Concepts working with Nottingham Girls' High School



Nottingham Girl's High School belongs to the Girls Day School Trust, a group of independent girls' schools which takes pupils from 4 to 18 years. GDST schools are generally very receptive towards language learning and cultural awareness and pupils at Nottingham Girls' High School are introduced to French, German, Spanish and Mandarin during their junior years. The school is also keen to introduce younger pupils to the practical and fun aspects of learning a language which is why they began working with Qi Concepts.

Nottingham-based Qi Concepts develops workforce potential through e-learning and Japanese language and cultural training. Kiyoko Naish of Qi Concepts has experience of visiting schools as part of Japan 21's 'Japan in Your Classroom' programme and was keen to help Nottingham Girls' to promote language learning amongst its younger pupils.

Following discussions between Kiyoko and the school, it was decided to offer two 45-minute sessions to a total of 250 pupils from reception through to Year 6. The sessions, held on 2nd March 2007, were run by 3 consultants from Qi Concepts: Kiyoko herself, Hiroko Clark and Maki Rabone.

This project is part of the Business Language Champions programme, co-ordinated by the Regional Language Network East Midlands. It is designed to bridge the gap between school and the workplace and to reverse the decline in the take up of modern foreign languages.

As the sessions had to keep young children interested, it was decided to base them around the Japanese Dolls Festival (Hinamatsuri) and include Japanese story telling and origami. The children were taught to count to 10 through the Accelerated Learning Technique of linking words to visual and kinaesthetic prompts, for example; learning Ichi, Ni (1,2) saw them bending down to scratch their knees.

The success of the sessions and pupils' enthusiasm led to the introduction of calligraphy sessions and lunch time clubs and many ideas were adapted for use in the Junior school. As the school focuses more on learning Chinese than Japanese they hope to introduce fun sessions where students can learn to write the characters common to both languages.

As Margaret Renshaw, Head of Nottingham Girl's High School (Juniors) said:

“Our pupils will enter a global economy and workplace it is essential that they develop a global perspective, awareness and tolerance from an early age.”

“These sessions have increased the children's awareness of a culture and language that is very different to their own at a young age when both their ears and minds are very receptive to new ideas.”

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