**Bilateral Exchange Visit to Poznan March 2018: Report**

Teachers: Richard Smyth and Lesley Smith

Students: Jasmine Wallis and Molly Boulton

It was interesting to see how languages are taught in Poland. Discussions with pupils and observations showed that an emphasis is placed on writing and grammar skills in order to be able to manipulate the language, but that speaking the language also plays a part. In one lesson observed in French, the complete lesson was delivered in the target language with only a few occasions where Polish had to be used in order to explain a particular concept. Students’ speaking skills were developed through the use of presentations about their families which were then the subject of a question and answer session to check comprehension. We also worked with a class studying English where a debate was used as the means of developing spoken language skills. A range of subjects was covered in the debate as each pair chose a different theme to discuss. Arguments were prepared for a period of 10 minutes to research their argument before all pairs debated in front of the class. This approach clearly developed oral skills as well as confidence in their developing ability in the language.

Our background is in Drama, English, humanities and Irish and it was felt it would be an interesting experiment to see truly how target language could be developed in a lesson when the student has no knowledge of that lesson. In Drama, gesture is often taught as a means of communication and we wanted to see how this could also be incorporated into a language lesson to help promote understanding. Irish was used as the taught foreign language, given that students had no previous knowledge of the language. An approach was taken whereby Irish was initially used in about half the utterance and slowly built up over a period of time until it became the only language I used in the delivery. Eventually students were able to count, to pronounce accurately and hold a simple conversation with their peers. The use of the target language clearly was an effective means of driving the language forward.

The visit gave us the valuable opportunity to gain a much better understanding of another European education system which we could compare with our own. Whilst much of what we observed might also be observed in our own school, there were clearly areas which we could address further, such as the debate which ensured that all students participated in from of their peers.

Richard Smyth