

Japanese as SEN (Special Educational Needs) Enrichment

This year is the first year that Japanese has been taught at Meadowhead School in Sheffield. As well as an after school Japanese Society, two Year 9 set 4's were given the opportunity to do one lesson a week as an enrichment activity in addition to the European language that they were already learning. Hilary Hunt and I were the teachers.

The enrichment classes were very popular with students as they offered something very different from the core curriculum. The students learnt vocabulary, some grammar, useful phrases and have been introduced to the concepts of hiragana and simple kanji. They covered about 10 different topics including transport, holidays, weather, food and clothes. The topics were taught in a hands-on way, for example "presenting a weather forecast" and making transport adverts. Many chose to use hiragana throughout the year (copied from the board or a grid). Japanese seems to have boosted their confidence, made them feel special and widened their horizons. Due to the lack of assessments it was seen as "fun" rather than arduous, but most students still took it seriously.

The school has decided to continue the experiment next year (2008/2009) and I am looking in to the possibility of taking advantage of the Japanese Embassy's "Club Taishikan" visit and Japan 21's native speaker scheme.

Tom Lockley, Meadowhead School, July 2008