

# Multilingual Mentoring in Primary Schools: A Model for Early Language Learning and Engagement

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## Abstract:

The Curriculum for Wales (CfW), a national curriculum reform aimed at developing skills, equity, and global citizenship, now mandates the earlier introduction of International Languages in all Welsh primary schools. This marks a significant shift in approach, emphasising early exposure to languages and cultures as essential to developing globally aware, socially responsible learners. Amid a long-term decline in language study at secondary level, this renewed emphasis is both timely and ambitious.

To support this vision, the Multilingual Mentoring Project (MMP) was launched in May 2024 to promote engagement with languages and cultural diversity among primary learners. Building on a decade of success in secondary schools through mentoring initiatives led by the MFL Mentoring project, this project explored how the mentoring model could be adapted for younger learners.

In autumn 2024, the programme was piloted in six Cardiff primary schools. Trained university student mentors led a combination of whole-class workshops and small-group sessions with Year 5 and 6 pupils, aiming to build curiosity, motivation, and intercultural awareness. The sessions used carefully designed resources to support progression in language awareness and cultural understanding. Evaluation included a baseline survey completed by 341 pupils and follow-up feedback from learners, mentors, and teachers.

Findings highlight the potential of creative, interactive mentoring to influence learner attitudes and support broader curriculum aims, including oracy, critical thinking, and intercultural understanding. Reflections from mentors and teachers also underscore the value of school–university collaboration in enriching educational experiences and advancing early language learning.

**Keywords:** multilingual mentoring, primary schools, early language learning, intercultural understanding

