

# Grand Union Language Network Newsletter

## January 2026

New Year, new you? In this month's newsletter we are here to support and inspire you with ways to enhance your practice, promote German and inspire your learners as we kick off the new term.

### In this month's newsletter:

1. What are your New Year's resolutions? Tips for enhancing KS2 to KS3 transition and [target language use](#).
2. Shout out for [German](#).
3. Start the new year on the right foot, [with details of our CPD programme for the spring term](#).
4. [Offers, initiatives and competitions](#) from regional organisations for language teachers and language learners.
5. [Community Languages](#) opportunities at Swanswell Language Network.



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## What's your New Year's resolution for your department?

### Do you want to consider transition between KS2 and KS3 in a more strategic way?

In each newsletter in 2026, we'll be signposting top tips to make transition between KS2 and KS3 more effective. The Curriculum and Assessment Review final report has identified KS2-KS3 Language Transition as a significant area for development. Thinking about transition is probably something that's been on your 'to do list' as a subject leader or a head of department for a while. But given it's one of the trickiest problems to solve, it probably hasn't made it to the top of the list just yet!

- Effective transition builds on prior learning, keeping learners engaged and enthusiastic about languages.
- A positive KS3 experience leads to stronger long-term outcomes, higher KS4 uptake, and more sustainable language departments.
- While transition work needs initial planning, collaboration saves time long-term, allowing space for more creative KS3 content.
- Collaboration is rewarding, enabling shared practice, mutual learning, and a clearer understanding of learners' journeys.

### January's Transition To Do List:

- **Step 1:** Primary: Find out which secondary school many of your learners go to.
- Secondary: Identify 2 / 3 primary schools where a significant number of your learners come from.
- **Step 2:** Phone the school reception, explain who you are, say you'd like to set up a meeting to explore KS2 / KS3 transition and ask for the name and e-mail address of the subject leader or the head of languages.
- **Step 3:** Send them an e-mail and suggest a couple of times when you could have an initial conversation.



If you are interested in exploring the evidence base around transition, check out Galton's work on the 5 Bridges of Transition.

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### What's your New Year's resolution for your classroom?

Do you want to increase the amount of Target Language you use in your classroom?



We know that language acquisition relies on the four factors above. One of the easiest ways to increase the amount of comprehensible input in our classrooms, is to increase our teacher use of Target Language during lessons. Don't worry we're not advocating 100% target language use in the classroom, rather thinking more strategically about how and when you can use the target language as part of your day-to-day classroom routines. A new year feels like a great time to reset and embed some new routines.

#### How can I do this?

1. Think carefully about **the utility of the TL** you choose to use in the lesson. Ideally, pick words and phrases, your students can also use in lessons and in real life. It's unlikely they are going to go around saying "listen" or "pick up your green pen in real life."
2. **Pick 5 phrases, instructions or idioms** that you want to embed into your practice. Make a note of them in your planner, make some posters for your classroom and then start using them.
3. **Tell your colleagues** or any trainee teachers in your department that you are planning on doing this. Ask them to **check in with your progress**.
4. Get the students on board. **Appoint a Target Language Advocate** who keeps a tally of how much TL you use during the lesson.
5. When the students see you using the TL in the lesson, **they might feel more encouraged** to do the same!
6. Consider rolling this out across your department. **Agree a list of common phrases** you'll use in each year group, to allow for **consistency and progression** from over the course of Ks3 and Ks4. Map out the content and then embed it in department handbook, policies and displays.

#### Explore this further on [LEO](#)

To explore the link between spontaneous use of target language and motivation, have a look at the **Relatedness, emotion and spontaneous language use** content on Language Educators Online (LEO). Professor Suzanne Graham from the University of Reading and Hon. Professor Bernardette Holmes explore how supporting our learners to actually 'talk' in the Target Language might impact positively on their intrinsic motivation.



[Register for your free LEO account](#)

[Go directly to the Relatedness, Emotion and Spontaneous Language Use Content](#)

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## January 2026

Get ready for German week 2026!  
19<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> January

After the resounding success of last year's inaugural edition, German Week returns in 2026 with renewed energy and fresh inspiration.

From 19 to 24 January 2026, the Goethe-Institut UK, the [German Embassy in London](#), and [the German Academic Exchange Service \(DAAD\)](#) once again invite schools across the UK to take part in a week-long celebration of the German language and culture.

Let's come together once more to celebrate the joy of learning German, wherever you are in the UK!



### German content on LEO

Did you know that there is a dedicated section on LEO specifically for German teachers? Designed and created by the Goethe Institut, these pages are tailored to support your CPD journey through the lens of German.

There is also plenty of German content on the main pages of LEO too. This includes video clips like from Language Network schools showcasing the delivery of their German curriculum.

[Explore the Goethe Institut content](#)

[Register for your free LEO account](#)

### How we are marking German Week in my school



Georgina Jackson

The aim of German Week is to make German more visible, vibrant, and engaging in schools. It is also a chance for schools to celebrate a modern, multifaceted Germany, to present pupils with a fresh, diverse, and contemporary image of the country, and to challenge the often-repeated and outdated clichés.

In my school we will be exploring German culture through our lessons, as well as giving KS3 students the opportunity to attend a performance in German by a visiting theatre company.

We will also be exploiting the fantastic free resources from the Goethe Institut including their 30-day journal.

[Download your free copy of the 30-day journal here!](#)

## CPD in the Spring Term delivered by the West Midlands Regional Language Network

Next term, the WMRLN will be hosting three virtual webinars. Each session will take place between 15.30 and 16.30

### **Wednesday 14th January** **Supporting HHCL GCSE** **qualifications**

Join the team from Swanswell and Amanda Millican from EMAS to discuss practical ways in which you can promote and support your students with their Home, Heritage, Community Language exams at GCSE and beyond.

Register:  
[WEBINAR: Supporting Home Language Qualifications at GCSE](#)

### **Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> January** **Using AI to develop spontaneous** **talk in the Language Classroom**

Join the team from Trent and Tame to consider how we can use AI to support the students in our classrooms to develop confidence and competence when speaking spontaneously.

Register:  
[Using AI to support with spontaneous speech development](#)

### **Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March** **Exploring different secondary MFL** **curriculum models**

Join the team from Grand Union as they share the findings of their NPP project on the impact of different secondary curriculum models on MFL uptake, motivation and engagement alongside the financial and logistical challenges of each model.

Register:  
[Microsoft Virtual Events Powered by Teams](#)

## Other CPD available in the Spring Term



### **Wednesday 28th January** **3.45pm – 4.45pm** **Every Voice Matters: Oracy for** **Disadvantaged and** **Multi-Lingual Learners**

Join our friends at the Staffordshire Research School for a virtual twilight session focusing on strengthening oracy for disadvantaged and multilingual learners.

Drawing on his experience as an Assistant Headteacher and an Evidence Lead for the Staffordshire Research School, John Marsh will bring a research-informed, practical approach showing how purposeful talk can boost learning, confidence and classroom engagement for all pupils. [Book your place here!](#)



### **Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> February** **8.30 – 4.00** **Crowne Plaza, Birmingham**

#### **Driving Sustainable and Inclusive language education**

In a time of educational reform and shifting policy landscapes, school leaders are uniquely placed to shape and secure the future of languages education.

Developed by ASCL and NCLE, this timely and thought-provoking conference invites school and system leaders to explore how to lead languages strategically, ensuring they thrive within inclusive, sustainable, and globally-minded curricula.

For more information visit: [ASCL - ASCL Conference for Strategic Leadership of Languages](#)

## NCLE National Webinars in the Spring Term

### **Wednesday 21st January 2026** **16:00-17:00** **Languages for All – a social justice issue.**

In this webinar, we'll be exploring different curriculum models and pedagogical approaches which offer appropriate cognitive, cultural and linguistic challenge. How do we plan and deliver lessons which relate to the learners whom we teach? How do we create an ethos of success? You will hear from practising teachers from the UK and international experts.

Register here



### **Wednesday 11th February 2026** **16:00-17:00** **Talking Classrooms: practical ideas for** **promoting use of the target language.**

Using the target language as the medium of instruction as well as the object of study has always been contentious. With inspiration from practising teachers, discover how interaction in the target language is not only accessible but makes a central contribution to progress in language learning.

[Register here](#)

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Offers, competitions and initiatives from regional organisations

## Oxford University Flash Fiction competition

Our annual Flash Fiction Competitions invite secondary school pupils to submit a complete story of no more than 100 words, in French, Spanish, or German, for the chance to win up to £100.

Our 2026 Competition marks the first year in which German will be included and we're excited to be expanding the Competition after many successful years! Entries are judged by a panel of academics who are primarily looking for creativity, imagination and narrative flair, as well as linguistic accuracy. Pupils' language skills will be considered in the context of their age and year group: in other words, we will not expect younger pupils to compete against older pupils linguistically.

Please note that pupils must enter the competition themselves: teachers cannot enter on their behalf for reasons of GDPR compliance. FAQs can be found [here](#) and any other questions can be directed to [schools.liaison@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk](mailto:schools.liaison@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk).

The submission deadline is 12 noon on 31 March 2026.

[Get a poster to advertise this competition to your students here](#)

## Opportunities for Primary learners

### Write away!

Write Away! is a termly online magazine which features and celebrates the writing that primary children do in their language lessons. It is an opportunity for children to see their work published, and a rich source

of inspiration for teachers looking for ideas for including writing in their schemes of work.



[Find out more here!](#)

### Excellence at Warwick

Some newly published pages from the University of Warwick provide an accessible overview of what a local university does and how academic subjects are explored at undergraduate level. You may find them useful to broaden students' understanding of post-16 and post-18 pathways, and it is amazing to see dedicated content for Arts and Humanities subjects.

[Go to the Excellence at Warwick page](#)



# Grand Union Language Network Newsletter January 2026

Community Languages opportunities at Swanswell Language Network



## International Mother Language Day 21<sup>st</sup> February 2026

Get ready to celebrate ALL languages, and champion your polyglot students and their language superpowers! IMLD2026 is all an opportunity to recognise all of the wonderful linguists in our school, and appreciate the amazing diversity of culture and language our students bring with them every day.

Swanswell Language Network invite you to celebrate all languages with us in February. We will have a range of in-school ready to use activities on our website available to download very soon, as well as a celebration day of workshops taking place. All details will be shared on our Twitter / BlueSky / Facebook.

[Find out more  
about IMLD](#)

Keep in touch with Grand Union Language Network and follow us for the latest news and updates

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