

Grand Union Language Network Newsletter

February 2026



Congratulations on surviving the 246 days of January! There are some promising signs out there; lighter mornings and evenings, flowers are making an appearance, and half term is only three days away! The second half-term brings with it mock exams, the final push before the speaking exam window, and plenty of cultural activities to get involved in! Check out page three of this month's newsletter for lots of low prep ideas to build into your lessons over the coming weeks.

In March, Grand Union Language Network will also be sharing their findings from their National Priority Project which has looked at the link between different curriculum models and student's engagement.

Actions from this month's newsletter:

1. Register for our webinar looking at [different MFL curriculum models](#).
2. Consider how to weave a spring 'feel' into your lessons with [easy, low prep activities](#).
3. Take a step forward [with KS2 / Ks3 transition](#) by contacting and holding a meeting with a neighbouring school.
4. Get ready for your HHCL exams by visiting Swanswell's new [HHCL teacher zone](#) and [community language website](#).



Exploring different secondary MFL curriculum models

Wednesday 4th March. 3.30pm - 4.30pm

Join the team from Grand Union as we share the findings of our National Priority Project focusing on the impact of different secondary curriculum models on MFL uptake, motivation and engagement alongside the financial and logistical challenges of each model. To register visit: [Grand Union Language Network - Our CPD](#)

This promises to be an excellent event, with lots to consider as you start to think about timetabling for the next academic year.

Have you missed any of our CPD sessions?

Supporting HHCL Students 14th January 2025

There was a great turnout for the Home, Heritage, Community Languages webinar in association with EMAS Coventry back in January. Steph Azarpey has now collated all of the questions from the webinar and requests for support on the [Swanswell Community Languages site](#). There is also a teacher zone with everything you could possibly need to run HHCL exams in your setting including letters, assemblies, timelines etc. If you can think of anything else that would be helpful, please let us know and Steph will update the site. Check out the teacher zone [here](#) and the recording from the webinar is available [here](#).

The key takeaway documents, slide decks and where available recordings from Grand Union Language Network's CPD events from the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 academic years are now available on our [website](#).

Recordings and resources from all of NCLE's webinars are also available on Language Educators Online (LEO) for you to catch up at a time to suit you. <https://ncle.ucl.ac.uk/ncle-cpd-webinars/>



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In each edition of the newsletter in 2026, we'll be signposting top tips to make transition between KS2 and KS3 more effective. In January, we suggested you make contact with one or two local schools where either your year 6 pupils go when they finish at your school or where your year 7 students have come from prior to starting in your secondary setting. For full details see our [January newsletter](#).

February's Transition To Do List:

Once you have made contact with a local primary or secondary school, it's time to meet! Face-to-face is always best but it's often not practical, so a teams meeting or telephone call can be equally valuable.

Step 1: Think carefully about what you want to get out of the meeting with your primary or secondary counterpart. What do you want to find out? We've included some suggested questions below.



Questions to ask primary colleagues	Questions to ask secondary colleagues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do learners enjoy their language lessons? • Do learners understand why they are learning a language? • Which language(s) do you teach in your setting? • Do learners continue with the same language from year 3 – 6? • Do learners have exposure to any other languages? • Which scheme of work do you follow? • What are the main topics within your scheme of work? • Do you explicitly teach TL phonics? If so, which approach / scheme do you use? • How can we work more collaboratively for the benefit of our learners? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do our former students say about their language learning experience in primary school? • What knowledge or skills do you think they bring with them from their primary language learning experience? • Which languages are taught in your setting? • How many hours of provision will students have each week? • What does a typical language lesson involve? • Do you follow a specific scheme of work? • Will students have the opportunity to go on any trips? • How can we work more collaboratively for the benefit of our learners?

Step 2: Once you've thought about what you want to get out of the meeting, think about whether it would be beneficial to gather some pupil voice or some examples of year 6 / year 7 work to share during the meeting.

Step 3: Enjoy the meeting! Remember, the most important thing at this point in time is to build a relationship with the other person, so that you can work collaboratively moving forward. KS2 / KS3 transition is complex. Primary colleagues come ready to show the secondary school how great your provision is. Secondary colleagues, try to keep an open mind, you might be surprised at how much language learning has already taken place before students arrive in your classrooms.

Step 4: At the end of the meeting, agree next steps. Might it be possible to visit each other's setting to see some lessons taking place? Would it be beneficial to conduct some more pupil voice? Are there opportunities for secondary students to return to their primary schools in the summer term in some capacity?

The first step to making KS2 / KS3 transition more effective is to communicate. There might not be any clear answers or solutions at the end of the first meeting, but these will come in time. Talking to your transition coordinator in your own school about what other subjects do might also yield some ideas!

Integrating Spring Themes in the Classroom

Carnaval/Karneval

Express Yourself: North East Festival of Languages is in full swing, with activities and events available for schools in the region as well as nationally. One of their competitions is a Karneval mask design contest. Details [here](#). Click [here](#) for their very FULL programme.



February 21st is **International Mother Language Day**. This special day offers us an opportunity to celebrate the diversity in our schools, and the super language powers of our wonderful EAL students. How will you be shining a light on this in schools? Swanswell language network have created a series of activities for teachers to use in lessons, tutor time, assembly and lunchtimes, all available to download for free on our [website](#).

Chinese New Year begins on February 17th. The British Council have made some wonderful resources which can be found [here](#).



Ramadan begins during half-term and is the holy month for Muslim students and staff. Build it into your lessons, using some of the excellent [resources](#) from the British Council. The Language Team at Bordesley Green Girls School in Birmingham have also very kindly shared a French lesson they prepared for World Hijab Day. The resource outlines the current situation in France in regards to wearing the Hijab, profiles les hijabeuses and contains engaging videos to stimulate discussion. This would be an excellent resource to use in Ks4 when looking at free time or school or with KS5 classes. Please e-mail tracy.williams@atlp.org.uk if you'd like to be sent the resource. Thank-you to the team at Bordesley Green for being so collaborative! 😊

Language Fest North West

Not to be outdone by their colleagues in the North East, our NCLE colleagues at the [Kinder](#), [Etherow](#) and [The Lakes](#) Language Networks are working together on a project called [Language Fest North West](#).



Throughout the month of February, there is a host of competitions and events that schools across the country can take part in. Full details can be found on their website. [Competition and Events | Language Fest North West](#)

Celebrate Speaking

A celebration of languages in education and community through speaking and performance

The British Council and NCLE Celebrate Speaking

Get ready to Celebrate Speaking in February. Encourage your pupils to show off their language skills by posting on social media a short video of them singing, talking or reciting in a language they are learning at school or one they speak in their community. Remember to use [#CelebrateSpeaking](#) so the British Council team can see your contributions. [Learn more about Celebrate Speaking here](#)

What's new on LEO?

National Consortium
for Languages Education

Swanswell
Language Network



Steph Azarpey

I have loved trying out AI over the past couple of years, to support me with my planning, resource creation, as well as administrative tasks as a teacher.

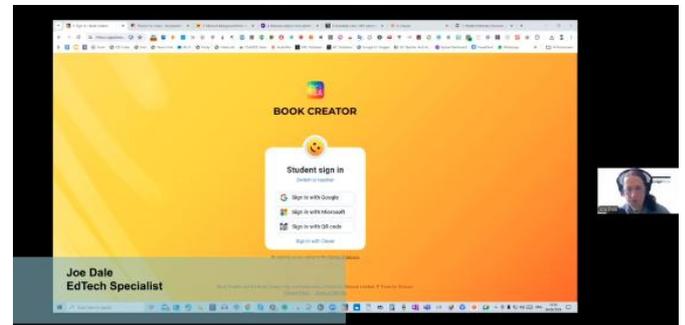
The AI content on LEO has been curated by Joe Dale. I enjoyed watching his step-by-step videos which have given me some new ideas of platforms to try out, all of which have a really clear, practical purpose in the languages classroom.

One of the videos that caught my attention was in the section entitled Engagement and Motivation. In this section, Joe Dale explains how you can use Book Creator to engage and motivate learners by creating personalised narratives, prompting the development of both speaking and writing skills simultaneously. [ME AI: Video Tutorial: Support Engagement & Motivation | NCLE](#)

[Click to register for your free LEO account](#)

[Read Joe Dale's Blog. AI in the languages classroom: enhancing not replacing the teacher role.](#)

[Click to go directly to the CPD course](#)



National Consortium for Languages Education | **Etherow Language Network**
led by Cheshire Hulme High School

National Priority Project: Innovate to motivate – Developing the languages curriculum

Project Summary: Support language teachers to innovate their curriculum with the purpose of increasing student engagement and motivation.

- Include rich cultural content in curriculum
- Include authentic / authenticated resources in curriculum
- Include relevant and engaging content for our learners
- Harness the increasing potential of AI / Edtech tools
- Create a collaborative community of practice and share ideas

Please get in contact if:

- To share anything relevant you are trying in your department
- For support to implement any of the ideas from this session
- To collaborate on the project in any other way

Project submission: February 2026

Supported by: Department for Education | UCL | BRITISH COUNCIL | GO THE NETWORK

If you are interested in using AI to add some innovation to your curriculum, please contact the [Etherow Language Network](#) which is based in Manchester.

Their National Priority Project has focused on using AI to develop rich cultural content within the curriculum. Slides and a recording of their webinar from earlier in the year are available by e-mailing etherowhub@chhs.org.uk

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

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