

The North Norfolk Latin Cluster Group: two case studies

by Jane Maguire, with Steven Hunt



They said 'Latin is elitist' and 'Not for Norfolk.' They were wrong. The two case studies outlined below show how small grants from the charity Classics For All were able to kickstart the development of Latin teaching in both the primary and the secondary sector in an area of the UK with very little or no previous provision.

Aims

The original aim of the Project was to raise standards in literacy and to widen aspirations early in students' school careers. The present focus is to meet statutory requirements for teaching ancient or modern languages at Key Stage 2.

Jane Maguire, the lead teacher of the

Project, is a modern languages specialist and former Gifted and Talented co-ordinator for the Great Yarmouth Excellence Cluster in ... Norfolk. The area is not the most likely of places to find Latin being taught: it is a rural area of some economic and social deprivation, where aspirations tend to be low, and where access to wider cultural opportunities are lacking. One of the key elements to address some of these issues was a link with Colly Mudie, the learning manager at Norwich Castle Museum, which has a small permanent 'Romans in Britain' exhibition.

Jane Maguire's remit was to focus developing Latin for all abilities, not just the Gifted and Talented, in the feeder primary schools for one secondary, with which she had contacts. This article, written in the light of the National Curriculum requirement for the study of a modern or ancient language at Key Stage 2, focuses on the experiences of the primary feeder schools, although it should be remembered that the whole Project is designed to link provision of Latin across the primary / secondary phases.

What is special about teaching Latin in the primary sector?

Latin offers a key to other areas of

learning which can accelerate learning in English Literacy and Modern Foreign Languages and support learning in history and other subject areas. The Project felt that it was possible to deliver Latin in the primary schools with relatively small resources:

- Latin does not require a specialist teacher. It can be delivered by a Teaching Assistant.
- Latin has excellent, innovative and proven teaching resources – including digital resources.
- Latin has training and on-going support available, funded by charitable organizations.



The first stage (2011-2013).

Latin was introduced to one secondary school and its feeder primary schools where there had been none before through teacher training and resources funding. Latin supports other areas of the curriculum, specifically English literacy, the learning of Modern Foreign Language and the study of history. This stage was a test case to see how the model could be developed, sustained and replicated elsewhere.

Case Study 1: North Walsham Cluster

With a grant from Classics for All Jane Maguire introduced Latin through the Minimus Latin course to a group of schools: one secondary school and its primary feeders. Jane enlisted two other teachers – a retired primary head and a part-time secondary teacher of Classics. The first step was to persuade the primary school heads that the Project was worth engaging with. Jane attended the primary heads cluster meetings, where she was invited to explain the Project, and sought offers of interest from all nine primaries. Apart from two infant schools all the other primary and junior schools expressed a desire to be involved. From there they were asked to identify an appropriate adult to be the link teacher. The aim was for this person to shadow the Project teacher. This was designed to build sustainability: when the Project teacher had led the way, it was expected that the link teacher would continue thereafter. In five out of the seven cases sustainability was achieved.

Pupils learning Latin:

In the first year of the Project, all the classes were small groups. Jane reckons that for the Project to work, the schools must decide what is best for them, rather than them having a ‘one size fits all’ approach imposed upon them. Swanton Abbott school offered Latin to a whole class, for example, and Worstead school a whole year group. But both of these schools are tiny and it made sense to offer to the whole cohort rather than selecting a group. In the majority of cases, however, schools chose smaller groups of Gifted and Talented pupils.

Teachers learning Latin:

There was a variety of experiences. In Antingham and Southrepps school a class teacher was able to participate in all the first year’s lessons with a small group in preparation for teaching her own class in the second year; in some schools Teaching Assistants participated and in others provision needed to be made to train new teachers / TAs for the second year. In Worstead school, one of the teachers came to the new training for the new cluster.

The most successful way of delivering training to the teachers who were going to take on the teaching after the initial Project had finished was by shadowing one of the Project teachers. This was hugely successful. Surveys revealed that the teachers (only two of whom had learnt Latin at school themselves) had learnt so much Latin, they had watched and practised teaching methods, become familiar with the structure of the course, and observed how children learnt from it and how they had reacted. They had an opportunity to learn in the same way in which the children learnt. This seemed to have had a positive impact on their own teaching.

This was a two-year Project. In the first year in each participating school there was a Project teacher and a shadow teacher / teaching assistant; in the second year, a Project teacher taking the first year group on, and the shadow teacher would start a new year group. The Minimus course book is suitable for two years of study.

Key issues

1) Identifying a teacher who can lead the Project. Getting schools to identify shadow teachers or teaching assistants and giving them time to attend the initial training course. Teaching assistants seem to have been keen to take classes and often stay in the school when other staff change their jobs.

2) Identifying the pupils. Some schools preferred to select a small group. However, if a school decides to restrict Latin to, say, the Gifted and Talented, this tends to perpetuate the image of Latin as being difficult or elitist. It is neither. Those schools which

offered Latin to all their pupils did not experience any difficulties with the course. Some schools, who had originally restricted Latin to selected pupils, opened the subject out to all their pupils in the second year of the Project.

3) Link with a local museum. The Norwich Castle Museum was integral to the Project. Every group had a Roman / Latin day based on the standard Roman day which the Museum offers, focused on the ‘*Iceni and the Romans*’ exhibition. The Roman day was changed to reflect Latin and the Minimus course. Pupils investigated and handled artefacts and did some simple linguistic activities such as sticking post-its of adjectives on the museum cases; there was a Roman soldier re-enactment, in which they were encouraged to use suitable military words; and the day ended with a version of the Three Little Pigs story, in Latin, with costumes paid for by the Roman Society.

4) Parental engagement. Parents’ events were scheduled and were partially successful. Accommodation was made



available at North Walsham High School, the secondary school in the cluster, which has a recently-built auditorium and meeting / training rooms. There was a parents' evening, followed by a morning event for all the participating schools, with guest speakers, including the author of *Minimus*, Barbara Bell. Turn out for parents was a little disappointing, but surveys revealed their enthusiasm for their children learning Latin and participating in the events. The pupils themselves liked the opportunity to meet their peers and work with each other and see their heroes *Minimus* and Barbara. There was increased parental attendance at one evening event when the children from each school performed sketches from the *Minimus* story to the combined audience.

5) Celebration event. In November 2103 there was a celebration evening held at Norwich Castle Museum, for the success of the North Walsham Cluster and as a welcome for the next stage. Information and displays were made; local councillors attended; the local MPs lent letters of support; one MP desired to go into a school and see for himself.

The whole Project took place with a grant of £25,000 over 2 years from the charity Classics for All and book grants from the Primary Latin Project and the Roman Society.

The second stage (2013-14)

Two other secondary schools and their feeder primary schools were invited to participate in a further development of the cluster and to gain further experience in the challenges facing schools which want to start teaching Latin.

Case study 2

In July 2013 two further cluster groups of primary feeders and a secondary school were identified as having potential and interest in developing the Project across this area of North Norfolk. They were invited to attend training at North Walsham High School. One cluster group was based on Aylsham High School and the other on and Dereham Neatherd School in Norfolk. In this model, at lower cost, training was provided centrally at North Walsham

High School, funded by the charity Classics for All. The primary teachers were trained by Jane Maguire and Barbara Bell, the author of *Minimus*, and the secondary teachers by Steven Hunt, director of the PGCE in Classics / Latin at the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education. Both sets of teachers came together at various points during the training sessions, to encourage the idea of a cross-phase partnership between school cluster groups. Participants included representatives from eight primary schools, including two head teachers, 5 teachers and 1 teaching assistant. 5 secondary school teachers and teaching assistants also attended. 4 teachers from the original Project also attended.

Of the original eight primary school teachers who attended, six started teaching Latin formally in September 2013, mostly with pupils from Year 6. Again a link was made with the Norwich castle Museum. Four primaries made special visits for specially-arranged *Minimus*-based Roman days, while the other two attended the standard Roman-themed museum sessions (this was due to imminent Ofsted inspections). In this version of the Project there





have not been any events at which all the pupils have met together. Instead, Jane Maguire has visited a number of schools to attend assemblies. The pupils themselves seem to like the attention of visitors and to feel that what they are doing is something special.

This Project received local and national media interest with dedicated news items on Anglia TV and Sky News (1st January, 2014).

The Project took place with a grant of £12,000 from the charity Classics for All and book grants from the Primary Latin Project and the Roman Society.

Why offer Latin in primary schools?

The National Curriculum (2014) requires all pupils at Key Stage 2 to study at least one ancient or modern language. In Latin there is no need to communicate or write in the language. Therefore there is less pressure on the pupils or the teacher – fluency is not required! Latin is the foundation of Romance modern languages – French, Spanish, Italian – and provides the ideal means to discuss in the mother tongue generic language issues, such as verb tenses (present, imperfect and perfect), simple noun case endings (singular and plural) and basic adjectival agreement. Many English words originate from Latin words, and pupils start to develop a wider vocabulary based especially on the significant scientific and cultural vocabulary which is considered important for achieving success in professional careers. Finally, the study of Latin in Minimus introduces

pupils to the wider socio-historical setting of the Romans and the ancient Britons: the text book is based on a narrative which follows a Roman family based in Vindolanda, a fortress on Hadrian's Wall. The stories themselves reference archaeological finds from the area. Thus Minimus engages pupils' wider cultural and historical understanding as well as promotes greater English literacy. The Minimus course book itself feeds neatly into the standard Latin text book used in nearly all secondary schools: the Cambridge Latin Course.

Funding

- Funding for teacher training was received from the charity Classics for All: www.classicsforall.org.uk.
- Funding for the Minimus course books (primary schools) was received from the Primary Latin Project: <http://www.minimus.com>.
- Funding for the Cambridge Latin Course text books (secondary schools) was received from the Roman Society: <http://www.romansociety.org>. Go to the 'grants and prizes' tab.
- Details of the Cambridge Latin Course can be found at www.cambridgescp.com. Jane Maguire is the co-ordinator of the North Norfolk Latin Cluster Projects.

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