Early Years and Mandarin

We have Mandarin in our school curriculum from ages 4-18 with all pupils in reception, Year 3, Year 6 and Year 7 learning Chinese. We do iGCSE, Pre-U and HSK IV at Key Stages 4 and 5. Our philosophy behind our Languages carousel programme in primary school, learning French, Spanish and Mandarin in rotation is to provide a sense of understanding of the wider world, language and culture. We have planned our reception curriculum with a variety of key skills and to reflect knowledge that they already have in their own language. This scheme is in its second year and working very well.

Chinese through play

Reception have learnt colours through play: using the magic bag to assess understanding and through Lego. We split the class and built an object using each colour and pupil in turn. We have also used Play-doh to build objects and have written Chinese characters in the sandpit.
Chinese through music
We have made up our own songs to well known tunes – such as the food song to the tune of ‘London bridge is falling down’
verse 1: 葡萄, 苹果, 橘子, 桃子
verse 2: 米饭, 鸡蛋, 面包, 面条
‘I am happy’ by Pharrell Williams became the animal song:
狗狗 狗猫 猫 猫 兔子 兔子 鱼 鱼 鱼
Some great songs were composed by our workshop participants!
Our reception girls have sung in Chinese New Year assembly and remember words exceptionally well through song.

Chinese through art
Water painting with brushes bought in Beijing market and finger painting always goes down well.

Chinese through drama, mime and dance
We act out the Chinese zodiac animal story, using a blue fabric river and all 12 soft toys (Beanie babies work well). One pupil is the Jade emperor with a crown and helps the teacher narrate the story by putting it into the first person.
Miming helps remember words, for example, acting out 狗 (wag tail), 兔子 (bunny ears).
Through Confucius Classroom funding, we hire a professional dancer at New Year to do a programme for each primary class, aimed at their level with lion, fan and parasol dancing.

Chinese through Apps
Plickers is great way of assessing the pupils for vocabulary. They draw the picture on their individual card and then hold up the right picture to the top when the teacher says the Chinese word.
Kahoot works well and is very popular with all levels of pupils and reception pupils were able to pick out the right character based on the story telling which we did for each character.
Chinese through stories

Making up stories to remember each character was fun – quotes from reception include
that 狗 has a flicky, hairy tail and a back leg, 兔子 has a person on the right feeding the
rabbit and the character on the left has bunny ears, legs and a fluffy tail. 猫 was described
as having 3 sticks that look like whiskers and the square is the window where the cat sits all
day. 仓鼠 is a hamster house, and paws holding food. The stories will be different each year,
but help with memory.
We have devised the story of ‘Happy Lion’ who comes to Chester from China to stay at our
school. On the way, he meets lots of animal friends and says, 你好 and 再见 and 我
叫 to each animal. Stories are easy to write and feed the imagination of reception pupils,
realising that China is so far away.

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Please feel free to contact us at The Queen’s School, Chester – we would be very happy to
welcome Chinese teachers to see what we do.