

Working together

IN THE summer of 2010, I had the opportunity to join the NVO Level 2 Spanish Course.

Instantly I knew this was something I wanted to do, mainly because of my love of language.

Coincidentally, my son had chosen this as one of his options but, unfortunately, neither Spanish nor focussing were his strengths, despite both being compulsory! I felt that if I did the course, whilst keeping my distance, I could support him should the need arise.

The course started in September for students and adults alike. I think, initially, everyone was self-conscious: the students because they were invaded by adults for the first time and probably thought they should act in a particular way; the adults because they were outnumbered by teenagers who were familiar with the school, the classroom environment and each other.

However, everyone has accepted each other's presence, without doubt due to Rachel Hawkes' ingenious plans for us to blend!

This firstly took the form of a short, introductory conversation with each other in Spanish, a task with which we all seemed very uncomfortable to begin with, but it worked. The second challenge (or nightmare) came when we had the first part of our exam, which was to deliver, individually, a business presentation to the class.....in Spanish.

It was comforting to see that, no matter our age, we all dreaded the prospect of public speaking equally, but it was, in fact, an ice breaker and I found it to be a confidence-boosting exercise and one in which we helped each other by listening to one another practice.

At Christmas we had festive quizzes in Spanish. Told to get into teams, the students gravitated to students, and adults to adults, until Rachel pointed out that having an adult on the team would significantly increase the chance of winning (not, I hasten to add, because we adults are great linguists by any means, but simply because our extra time on the planet meant we would probably know the answers in English).

I have noticed that it's now second nature to get into a mixed student/adult team and we don't gravitate to our own age group as before. Just as the stu-

dents have drawn on our age (and I use the word 'age' loosely), we have drawn on their IT knowledge; it appears that handing in class work these days can be done electronically, with a little help from a teenager!

One of the bonuses of having my Mum in the class is that I get help with work and homework if I need it and I always keep on track.

In our lessons, instead of just learning verbs and grammar, I am learning about life in Spain and about things which will help me with business in the future. Señora Hawkes teaches in a fun and exciting way, with lots of activities and games rather than just sitting behind a desk. I think this motivates me more. I really like the way we have learnt words through hand gestures.

I used to hate doing Spanish but, because of the way we learn and the mixed class, I am enjoying Spanish a lot now and I want to do well in it.

Clearly this is not always the case. I am sure that there are interesting theories as to why mixed age/mixed experience classes work, such as younger students benefitting from the modelling of older ones. I am not familiar with these theories but I do know that it works and it works well. I am really enjoying this course and when we've taken our final exam I would love to continue further, should the opportunity arise.

Charlotte Hart



TEAMWORK: Adults and pupils problem-solving in the Spanish NVQ class.

Help with homework is always at hand

I HAVE been doing NVO Level 2 Spanish with Señora Hawkes since September, as one of my GCSE options.

One thing that makes my class different to regular classes is that it is mixed with adults from the community and staff from Comberton Village College. I think this helps as it gives you the confidence to mix and learn with people who are older and more experienced in life than you.

Another thing about this class is that my Mum goes to it! When she first told me she was going, I thought "No way," because I thought it would be really embarrassing but, after the first lesson it didn't bother me at all and I was having fun doing Spanish with my Mum.

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Toby Hart (10C)

Variety of roles for international leaders

My name is Paige Slade and I'm a Year 11 International Leader. As an International Leader I help Year 7s who are struggling with their Spanish homework and I run the Interact Club with three other Year 11s.

In the Interact Club we are filling an aquabox which will be sent to a disaster area, we are raising money for an international charity in South Africa as well as doing some community service.

Being an International Leader is fun and rewarding. I get to meet different people and raise money for charities close to my heart.



DIFFERENT JOBS: For Comberton's international leaders.

Hi, my name is Hannah Day and I am a Year 11 International Leader. My role is to help younger pupils in the school to improve and practise their Spanish, which involves coming to ML7 on a Thursday lunchtime and sitting with the pupils, looking at a topic which they may not understand. This would also involve helping the Year 7s with their homework as this is their chance to

do it and get help from us Year 11s who have a little more experience. I really enjoy doing this as the people who I help are always very grateful and I get a buzz out of knowing that I have done something to contribute to the school and the pupils. I will enjoy having this role until the end of Year 11, when I will have to hand it over.

Hi, I'm Samantha Menezes and I'm a Year 9 International Leader. I help with clubs such as Spelling Bee and Interact Club.

At Spelling Bee we help Year 7s practise for their competition which is regional and is now going national.

At Interact Club we fill in an Aquabox with items such as clothes, nappies and essentials for a family in a less developed country. Then the box turns into a water purifier. It is great fun to be an International Leader and I would recommend it to anyone!