

A week of Celebrating Languages in Portsmouth 16 – 20 March 2026

Celebrating Languages, Diversity and Culture

Tuesday 11 November 2025 1600 (online)

Minutes

- **Welcome and introductions**

Attendees: Andrew Starr (UoP, Twinning, COPC), David Percival (Libraries), Karen Thomas (Chair and EMAS), Marie Allen (EMAS), Ellie Brodin-Thornhill (Wimborne Language Lead and KS2-3 Transition WP), Rachel Milne (Solent Junior Language Lead and KS2-3 Transition WP), Emily Painter (Mayfield MFL and EAL) Lucy Humphreys (Mayfield MFL), Aamir Kohli (Solent Language Network and Trafalgar), Rebecca Britti (Solent Language Network and ALNS), Paul Joyce (UoP, Languages), Liz Lord (SLN and ALL)

Apologies: Tanya Riordan (UoP, PGCE MFL), Gemma Cake (PCC, Hearing-impaired Unit), Gina Wada (St Jude's Language Lead and KS2-3 Transition WP), Sarah Adie (Language Lead at St John's, St Swithun's, St Paul's and Corpus Christi and KS2-3 Transition WP)

- **Brief recap of Celebrations 2025**

For this first 'celebrations week' in March 2025, schools and education settings were encouraged to take part to the extent they felt able. The response was overwhelming.

- at least 7 secondary schools and 15 primary schools involved their learners in languages celebrations
- pupils and staff from 4 primaries and 5 secondaries enjoyed the flavours and music and cultural activities at the University of Portsmouth's Festival of Cultures, part of Global Week; and, importantly, new links were made too
- over 300 primary pupils enjoyed taster lessons, including German, and were excited to meet teachers from 'big school'
- yummy recipes from Afghanistan, Yemen, Lithuania and lots more were received for the 'Taste of Portsmouth, Taste of Home' cookbook
- trainee languages teachers from UoP encouraged their placement schools in Portsmouth, and beyond, to join in with the celebrations
- the Institut Français visited ALNS and inspired lots of the City's secondary pupils with dazzling activities

- the 'What does Friendship mean?' competition inspired young language learners to share their thoughts
- the wonderful, wonderful EMAS team provided schools with fact-filled PPTs for each of Portsmouth's five most widely spoken languages for schools to use as a Language of the Day resource
- and we received an email from the office of Bridget Phillipson, Secretary of State for Education, wishing us well with our efforts!

- **Should we have a theme for 16 – 20 March 2026?**

A clear winner from the discussion was including the idea of 'belonging' (thank you, Rachel, Marie and Amir). Possible options:

- Celebrating Languages (in Portsmouth): A Sense of Belonging
- Celebrating Languages (in Portsmouth): Voices of Belonging
- Celebrating Languages (in Portsmouth); Sharing and Belonging

It would be good to agree a theme/title for our celebrations for when we launch the celebrations in January 2026. **ACTION: Please send your preference from the three options above – or indeed your personal suggestion – to Liz by 1 December 2025 (lizlord0502@gmail.com).**

- **Who could be involved?**

Currently, we are involving primary and secondary schools in the City, the University of Portsmouth (Languages and Education), EMAS, the libraries service, the twinning organisations, the Vision and Hearing Team, the Solent Language Network. Further suggestions: encourage involvement from City of Portsmouth College, the Port Authority, Brittany Ferries **(Liz will contact these.)**

ACTION: Who else can we involve? Please share your thoughts and send to Liz by 1 December 2025 (lizlord0502@gmail.com)

- **What kind of activities? Key events? Lots of discussion re possibilities.**

- Schools and settings would be encouraged to organise individual activities – big or small.
- Library service. Posters and information in libraries prior to the week. Strong promotion of amazing library resources in different languages, and availability of Press Reader for accessing newspapers and magazines in different languages. Fantastic collection of German books in Central Library, gifted from Duisburg. Rhyme-time sessions in different languages, organised across the city's libraries, for pre-school children and parents/carers. Possibility of support with story-telling from EMAS BLAs.

This would be an excellent opportunity to widen participation with younger children and adults involved.

- Discussion about a possible 'Celebrations Book'. Marie presented her thoughts on inviting submissions for an 'Identity and Belonging' book, to include poems, songs or short stories in a home or heritage language, or language of submitter's choice. This could be an E-book, as well as a physical copy. Marie further suggested that the book could include QR codes, which would enable readers to hear the song or poem or short story being narrated. (Aamir agreed this was possible.)
- Linking to the City's 100 Birthday Celebrations, Andrew suggested that we could aim to involve children (Students? Adults?) wishing the City a Happy Hundredth Birthday in 100 different languages.
- Continuing this theme, Aamir (at the end of the meeting) suggested investigating the possibility of having billboard posters, with the Happy Birthday message printed in different languages – a gentle counterpoint to the proliferation of flags, perhaps? **ACTION: Aamir to investigate the billboard idea and to report back at next meeting.**
- Calligram competition. Similar to the Association for Language Learning (ALL) competition held each spring, we could encourage entries to our Calligram competition (these could also be forwarded to ALL). A Calligram is a 'shape poem', where words on a particular theme are used to draw an object related to that theme. Calligrams created using different scripts can be particularly striking.



- Portsmouth, City of Languages theme song. Excitingly, the Music Service have commissioned a song for our initiative. Following a joint meeting, Karen will report back with details about how the song will be launched.
- Hopefully, videos of the song will be available to schools. Schools could upload videos of their learners performing the song.
- Create your own verse. We could encourage the submission of additional verses for the song or verses written in a different language.

- Collaboration with Twinkl. The resource-making company has agreed to support Portsmouth, City of Languages, (as it has done with Sheffield and Newcastle) and may be able to put on some events during the Celebrations Week.
- Twinning: Carol Clark has reported that schoolchildren from Portsmouth's Japanese twinning partner will again visit the city and Mayfield next year. This will coincide with the Celebrations Week.
- Additionally, Carol has suggested that live exchange meetings could be set up for classes in Portsmouth schools and schools in Portsmouth's twinning partner cities.
- Carol has also offered to provide schools with worksheets on Portsmouth's twinning partner cities that could be completed during the Celebrations Week.
- EMAS will again provide schools with daily resources to celebrate the different languages spoken and cultures experienced in the city.
- Karen and her team are currently developing a further resource package that encourages learners to consider the similarities and differences of languages, e.g. words in other languages that don't exist in English or can't be translated directly – 'Fernweh' = distance pain, an expression in German, meaning a sickness or longing to travel far, the opposite of 'Heimweh' or homesickness.

Schools that are signed up to EMAS already have access to a wide range of resources, which can support the recognition and celebration of different languages and cultures.

- Rebecca reported that the Goethe-Institut would like to visit Portsmouth during our Celebrations Week to put on a Careers Day for Portsmouth young people, and in collaboration with the University.
- Possibly taster lessons in Spanish, German or French could be offered by secondary colleagues to primary schools.
- **Links with University Global Week and Festival of Cultures.** Andrew and Paul reported that this will now be extended to a month of activities, under the banner of 'One World', which resonates beautifully with our theme of 'Belonging'. The Festival of Cultures will take place on 27 March, and it is hoped that schoolchildren and students will be able to attend, similarly to this year.
- **Involving MPs, Lord Mayor, City Council Leader.** Both local MPs have been briefed re the Portsmouth, City of Languages initiative, and have expressed interest in supporting our efforts. Stephen Morgan could only be available to participate on a Friday – what could we involve him in?
- Aamir suggested that, as Ramadan will come to an end during the Celebrations Week, leading to the Eid celebration on Friday, perhaps we

could involve local dignitaries in an event relating to this - possibly a community iftar?

- Carol Clark will consider how/if the Lord Mayor could be involved.
- Members of the PCoL steering group will meet with Councillor Pitt, Leader of the City Council in early January – this will be an opportunity to inform him about our efforts.
- **PGCE / EMAS Diversity Day.**
 - Tanya has said that, once again, she will encourage her PGCE trainee teachers to come up with ideas/activities/resources for the Celebrations Week that can be shared widely. Additionally, Tanya will ask trainees to encourage their placement schools, in Portsmouth or further afield, to participate in activities to support the Celebrations Week.
 - Marie spoke about the resources that have been created jointly by EMAS and Tanya and the UoP trainee languages teachers to support the Diversity Day, held annually at Cottage Grove Primary School. Marie and Tanya are happy to share these resources with schools interested in replicating the activities. Marie also spoke about a translation/story-telling resource pack which has proved very successful (perhaps more so with older learners).
ACTION: Anyone interested in learning more about these resources should contact Marie (marie.allen@portsmouthcc.gov.uk) or Tanya (tanya.riordan@port.ac.uk)
- **Publicity / Sponsorship?**
 - Information about the Celebrations Week and activities will be communicated regularly via the usual channels e.g. PEP bulletin, PCoL website, SLN website, Languages Updates, EMAS bulletin, emails. **Any other thoughts gratefully received.**
 - Emily suggested that careful thought needs to be given in relation to timings of information and deadlines for activities. For example, the 'write your own verse' competition or 'submit a poem or song in your chosen language' book could be launched during the Celebrations Week with a deadline of the end of the Easter holidays. **Again, please let us know your thoughts.**
 - We were fortunate that the Solent Language Hub were able to fund a print-run of the Taste of Portsmouth Recipe Book, and the School of Education, Linguistics and Languages at the UoP provided funding for prizes for the Friendship competition.
 - Certificates were issued to all participants, schools and individuals, with the support of PCC.
 - Liz will approach the Port Authority and Brittany Ferries re potential support/sponsorship.
 - **Please let us know your thoughts about other potential sponsorship.**

- **Responsibilities**

- **Please let us know if you would like to assume (joint) responsibility for a city-wide activity.**

- **Next meeting:**

- **Tuesday 13 January 2026. An invitation and meeting link will be sent out shortly.**