Our School

Leith Academy, situated in the north of Edinburgh in the historic port area of the city, has a long and illustrious history, being founded in 1560. The school celebrated its 450th anniversary in 2010, with its anniversary open afternoon attracting over 700 former pupils. Distinguished alumni include David McLetchie, MSP and former leader of the Scottish Conservative Party, Kitch Christie, coach of the South African rugby team and John Home, Scottish poet and dramatist. The author of the Harry Potter books, J K Rowling, was for a period of time a Modern Languages teacher in the school.

The current school has first-class facilities, housed in a well-maintained 1990s building that is architecturally striking. The entrance comprises a large and bright atrium filled with plants and adorned with colourful banners celebrating aspects of the school’s life and work. We are a six year community comprehensive school which boasts extensive modern learning and teaching facilities within a campus that includes a swimming pool and all weather pitches. As a community school, Leith Academy is fully aware of the importance of ‘lifelong learning’ and offers an extensive range of classes for adult learners in addition to its provision for school-aged learners.

ICT facilities in the school are of a high standard. For example, all four dedicated languages classrooms (plus one shared), benefit from interactive whiteboard technology (and language listening and recording units where appropriate). There are four sets of class-in-a-box across the school to enhance pupil access to the internet. The school has a very well-resourced Library Resource Centre, whose Manager is heavily involved in supporting learning and teaching across the school, including in Modern Languages. ICT in the school supports pen friend (e-mail) links with European countries, coordinated by the Modern Languages Faculty. Our partnership with a school in Malawi, involves electronic communication, sharing of resources and bilateral teacher/student visits.

Leith’s roll is currently approximately 900 students drawn from a range of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, including a small Chinese cohort and a high – and growing – number of bilingual learners. The school successfully delivers an inclusive curriculum in line with the principles and practices of Curriculum for Excellence. Improving attainment and achievement for all learners is a continuing priority.

Our Commitment to Mandarin and Chinese Studies

The teaching of Mandarin is already well-established at the school with a commitment to developing this over the past three years, led by Modern Languages staff and the Headteacher, who was formerly a Modern Languages teacher. For three years British Council Chinese Language assistants have worked at Leith Academy providing taster courses and contributing to cross-curricular work with a focus on Chinese language and culture. In 2011-12, the appointment of a probationer teacher has seen the development of Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) national examination courses in Mandarin for students, ranging from Languages for Work Purposes through Access 3 courses to SQA Higher, passes at which level are required for university entrance in Scotland. Leith Academy is currently the only City of Edinburgh secondary school to offer its students the opportunity to study Mandarin to this level. This underlines our commitment and offers a platform for continuing future success.

We are also fully committed to the study of Chinese culture and society in our school. For example, senior students study aspects of contemporary Chinese culture as part of their courses in Modern Studies. Moreover, as Leith Academy offers the largest community education programme of all the community high schools in Edinburgh, there is ample scope to include Mandarin within the range of adult classes we offer.

Wider Achievement

We are very proud of our wider achievements in Mandarin. For example, senior students reached the 2012 national finals of the HSBC/British Council Mandarin Speaking competition (Beginners). We were one of only two Scottish state schools to progress to the finals in London. Students who study Mandarin make substantial contributions to the school’s celebrations.
Values:

- success in learning for all
- mutual respect and caring for others
- individual needs and development
- honesty and fairness in our actions

of diversity, most recently reciting Mandarin poems to an audience of over 400.

International Education

Leith Academy has been acknowledged nationally for its work in celebrating diversity by Education Scotland and held up as a model of good practice that has been shared across Scotland. Our commitment to global citizenship is also reflected in our partnership with the school in Malawi. We are now keen to enhance our international education programme through developing links with No 1 School in Tianjin. These links can build on the visit to Tianjin by the Headteacher in April 2012, when the opportunity to share information in a most hospitable environment, gave a strong indication of the successful links that can be established with the school, on behalf of the City of Edinburgh.

Links with Primary Schools

We already have very close links with our four cluster primary schools which all include classes for nursery aged children from 3-5. Three of these schools are situated in very close proximity to the school, as is an affiliated stand-alone nursery school. Collaboration and joint curriculum planning in Modern Languages are very well established across the Leith cluster schools, as are joint Continuous Professional Development (CPD) sessions for all primary and secondary staff. If we were successful in our bid to host the CEC Confucius Classroom Hub, these links could be built on to develop an innovative, whole-school, cross-curricular China programme for children aged 3-15, with supporting resources. This will be trialled in the cluster schools before being rolled out across Edinburgh. The CEC Modern Languages Development Officer will lead this work with a group of school practitioners as part of CEC Education Service’s China strategy.

Links with cluster schools on Chinese language and culture will also be fostered through visits to the Hub by children from local primary schools, the use of Glow and the CEC intranet as well as participation in, and attendance at, Hub events. Introduction to Mandarin classes will also be provided in the Hub for Edinburgh primary teachers as part of the CEC strategy for taking forward the study of Chinese language and culture in Edinburgh schools.

The Confucius Classroom Hub

A classroom located on the first floor of the school will function as the CEC Hub. It is already equipped with appropriate furniture and fittings but will be cosmetically upgraded and access to ICT ensured. This room can accommodate groups of students or adult learners for Mandarin language classes or for focusing more on culture and civilization. It is also a suitable venue for staff training. The room is close to the Modern Languages Faculty and also to the Social Subjects Faculty. This location helps underline that the Hub, while central to Languages provision, is also a whole-school resource. It is also easily accessible to staff, students and visitors from other schools. It will house the Chinese language and culture resources which the school already has, those which Hanban provides and any future investments. Dedicated Confucius Hub display boards, with attractive changing displays, will be fixed in the corridor adjacent to this classroom to highlight the exceptional nature of the Confucius Classroom and provide a welcoming entrance for students and visitors.

In addition, a section of the spacious, well-equipped Resource Centre will be used as a repository and mobile exhibition area for Hub and other Chinese language and culture resources. It is also intended that display and exhibition materials will be accessible to parents on open evenings and travelling displays taken to local primary schools and community events.

That Leith Academy itself is relatively centrally located in Edinburgh, on major bus routes and with extensive car parking facilities, also means that use by staff and students from across the city is easily facilitated. It should also be noted that the school is already a major venue for CEC-organised staff training and that Community staff based at the school already have the expertise and experience of co-ordinating bookings for a variety of courses and events. They will bring this to bear in opening up the Classroom beyond Leith Academy’s use to staff and students from across Edinburgh.
Leadership and Management of the City of Edinburgh Confucius Classroom Hub

Strategic Leadership

The conferring by Hanban of the Confucius Classroom Hub on Leith Academy would be an honour that the school would be very proud to accept. There is therefore an absolute commitment from senior leaders at the school that the maintenance and development of the Hub will be a priority.

In line with the CEC Education Service's strategy for taking forward the study of Chinese language and culture (see separate submission), a management group will be set up to drive Confucius Classroom Hub developments forward. This group will be led by the Headteacher of Leith Academy. He is himself a linguist and so has a real insight and expertise into how language learning can be best advanced.

The group will also include a headteacher from an associated primary school to ensure primary staff and children from the earliest stages are able to access the Hub facilities to learn about Chinese language and culture. The CEC Quality Improvement Officer for Languages and the Development Officer for Modern Languages will contribute their time and expertise to the management group as part of the wider CEC Education Service China strategy. As Community Learning and Development (CLD) staff will play a key role in the planning and delivery of Hub services to adult and other learners in the wider Leith community, a senior CLD worker will be on the management group.

This group will closely monitor and evaluate the impact of the work undertaken and report to the Director of Education, Children and Families, to the Convener of the CEC Education Committee and committee members and to the Senior Manager, Quality and Improvement.

Operational Leadership

The Curriculum Leader Modern Languages has already shown herself capable of managing a successfully developing faculty and will be able to incorporate the day-to-day operation of the Hub into her responsibilities. A full-time, permanent teacher of Mandarin is being appointed by CEC to start in August 2012. This teacher will be based at Leith Academy, line-managed by the Curriculum Leader for Modern Languages, and have a leading role in teaching Chinese language and culture classes to students, teachers and adult learners from across Edinburgh as part of the CEC China strategy. CEC has also allocated a part-time probationer teacher of Mandarin to Leith Academy for session 2012-13. The CEC Modern Languages Development Officer will also devote one day a week to supporting the school in developing the Confucius Classroom Hub should its bid be successful.

Headteacher