

NEWS RELEASE

Entrepreneur input helps double language uptake

Teachers at Paget High School in Burton are celebrating after the number of students opting to take languages more than doubled with help from a local entrepreneur.

The decline in the number of language students has been much publicised, which is why Angela Maxwell, former European advisor to UK Trade & Investment and director of Acuwomen - the UK's first company to bring an all-women group of entrepreneurs under one roof - visited the school earlier this year to promote the importance of language skills.

During a specially arranged assembly Angela talked to Year 9 students about her experience of using languages, including being honoured by the Queen at Buckingham Palace for her outstanding contribution to UK Trade and Industry. Pupils were then split into groups to question Angela about why they need languages and how businesses make use of such skills.

The talks had a lasting effect on pupils and combined with the continued enthusiasm of language staff contributed to more than doubling the number of students opting to take languages post-14. In September, 23 German students and 19 French students will commence GCSE classes, compared with just 10 students last year.

This project is part of the Business Language Champions programme, which is co-ordinated by Regional Language Network West Midlands (RLN WM). It is designed to bridge the gap between school and the workplace and to reverse the recent decline in the take up of modern foreign languages. The 'Champions' bring language skills alive by highlighting the problems local companies have recruiting staff that can speak more than one language and helping pupils to see how important these skills are in the workplace.

Head of Languages, Janet Nash, was delighted with the numbers, saying:

“Angela's hard work has been much appreciated and we are really pleased with the numbers for next year. It just goes to show that students respond well to having a 'real-life' perspective on their studies. We look forward to working with Angela again in the future and are grateful to the RLN for organising this partnership.”

Angela added:

“I’m not sure that I can take all the credit as Janet is a fantastic teacher but I am really pleased that we all had such a positive impact.”

Chris Everall, RLN manager, was pleased with the programme’s continued success:

“It’s great to see this when there is so much coverage about the decline in language skills in UK schools. We are delighted that the Business Language Champions programme was able to bring Angela and Paget High School together.”

Paget High is an 11-18 school serving Burton and Branston and currently teaches French, German, Spanish and Urdu.

Angela Maxwell is one of the region’s most dynamic entrepreneurs after building Birmingham-based Fracino, the UK’s only manufacturer of espresso and cappuccino coffee machines, from a £400,000 turnover in 1995 to its current status as a £2 million world-class leading brand. She was a finalist in Businesswoman of the Year 2005 and also recently accepted an invitation to become a regional ambassador for the Women’s Enterprise Network.

Business Language Champions is a programme funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and supported by a network of sponsors: BNP Paribas, Goethe-Institut, the National Network of Education and Business Partnerships, Business in the Community and the Comenius Network. It is co-ordinated by the Regional Language Network West Midlands with the support of CILT, The National Centre for Languages.

For further information on Regional Language Network West Midlands visit www.rln-westmidlands.com.

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Notes to editors

Regional Language Network West Midlands offers a one-stop shop for language and cultural expertise for businesses in the region. Acting as the gateway to language services, courses and jobs within the region, the network helps SMEs to realise their export potential through improving their international communication. By helping companies to find solutions to language and cultural barriers it aims to trigger greater international trading boosting investment, job creation and business' bottom lines.