



# Classics for All: Establishing the Classics Hub

by Hilary Hodgson and Xavier Murray-Pollock

Five years since its launch in 2010, *Classics for All (CfA)* has an increasingly high profile in schools. For anyone still not in the picture, *CfA* works to increase take-up of Classics (Latin, Greek, Classical Civilisation, Ancient History) in state primary and secondary schools across the UK.

50 or so new Classics teachers qualify through the PGCEs at the University of Cambridge, King's College London and the University of Sussex. Many of them go on to take up first posts in large departments in independent schools. It therefore continues to be challenging to find sufficient teachers to fill posts in small or one-person departments in state schools – despite the numbers of such posts having increased in recent years due to Government encouragement of classics in the state sector. Meanwhile provision through the UK is patchy, with a preponderance of schools in London and the South-East and large areas of the UK with very little experience of offering any sort of Classics at all.

It is hard to find more compelling arguments for the charity's mission than statistics from two recent studies. In 2010, Pembroke College Oxford found that only 18 state secondary in London's five most deprived boroughs offered Latin.<sup>1</sup> Of these, most offered Latin only to KS3; schools that took Latin to A Level were very rare. In the same year, the charity Friends of Classics reported that 47% of the 3,000 schools surveyed wanted to

introduce Classics subjects but lacked the resources and support to do so.

*CfA* was set up to offer grants to state schools to help support the introduction of Classics to all pupils, regardless of their background, ability or circumstances. It has so far granted over £300,000 of funding to 300 state primary and secondary schools to introduce Classics, reaching 150 teachers, and 6,000 pupils. The work sounds straightforward but it is not without challenges, including the above-mentioned shortage of properly-trained teachers and, increasingly, an overcrowded curriculum. Over the last five years, investing in regional Classics networks or 'hubs' has proved to be *CfA's* most effective strategy.

It was one of *CfA's* early grants that influenced the development of the hub model. In 2010 *CfA* made a grant to Rowlie Darby, the Head of English at Patcham High School in Brighton, to expand the teaching of Latin in his school to students from neighbouring state schools. By January 2011, 74 of Rowlie's students had passed the Stage 4 *Cambridge Latin Course* tests, and by June, 41 students took the Level 1 WJEC Latin Certificate.

Buoyed by this success, Rowlie persuaded more schools to join the classical bandwagon and is helping to train other non-specialists to teach Classical Civilisation and Latin; Classics now have a place in six Brighton and Hove secondary schools up to GCSE and A level, along with plans to work in 10 primary schools.

Recognising the merits of a 'hub' as a way of offering flexible, relevant and cost-effective local support, since 2013 *CfA* has supported the set-up of nine similar networks in both isolated rural and densely-populated urban areas. These offer Continuing Professional Development (CPD), resources and advice for local teachers at different points on their Classical journeys.

There is no one blueprint for success and hubs are clearly most effective when they draw on regional strengths. In cities with a reasonable Classics infrastructure, like Manchester and Liverpool, partnerships between universities, Classics Associations and schools offer a powerful and stable focus for development.

Capital Classics is London's hub. Originally funded by the London Schools Excellence Fund and based at the East End Classics Centre at BSix College, this has offered 320 hours of teacher training, CPD and student enrichment to 60 primary and secondary schools across the city. Like other *CfA* city hubs, Capital Classics has benefited hugely from the support of first-class academic institutions including London, Oxford and Cambridge universities. Among other things, university partners have worked with *CfA* to champion Classics, raise funds, train teachers and send academics and students into schools to inspire young learners about the ancient world.

In rural areas where there is less infrastructure, it is the schools themselves or individual trainers that often take a

leadership role. In Norfolk, where the distance between schools is a barrier to networking, freelance trainer Jane Maguire offers both central group and one-to-one training for non-specialist teachers. Over time, this has led to the introduction of Latin and Classical Civilisation as part of the mainstream curriculum for over 600 pupils in 10 local primary and secondary schools.

It is still early days, but there is significant evidence that the hub approach has:

- Promoted peer-led training led by teachers that is sensitive to local needs
- Fostered new approaches to teacher training, including the integration of Classics in primary PGCE courses
- Encouraged the pooling of resources and the exchange of good practice
- Strengthened levels of mentoring and volunteer support
- Saved time and money on travel and resources.

Establishing such connections between local schools is part of a longer-term strategy that is likely to make Classics more sustainable – creating an environment where schools can build on local expertise and help one another to embed Classics in the curriculum.

Slowly but surely we hope that such structured support will enhance teachers'

subject knowledge and equip them to approach the teaching of Classical Civilisation, Ancient History, Latin and Greek with confidence, whether the challenge is enhancing the study of Roman culture at Key Stage 2 or navigating the GCSE or A Level specifications.

A further argument supporting a cluster or hub approach is the introduction of Latin and Greek as options for compulsory language study in the KS2 and KS3/4 curriculum. Growing interest in Latin, stimulated by this policy change, offers opportunities to work across primary and secondary phases, building a pipeline of pupils studying Classics from primary to secondary school. In the longer term we envisage that primary school Latin will increase demand for Classics in the secondary schools, enhance literacy and offer a solid foundation for studying modern or ancient languages at Key Stage 3.

In summary, fostering regional partnerships is key to reviving Classics in state schools and stimulating further demand.

Classics for All is keen to hear from schools, Classics organisations, universities and individuals with ideas for strengthening Classics teaching in their area. Whether you have contacts, time, local knowledge, Classics expertise or are looking for funding support, we encourage you to get in touch with us, care of [hilary@classicsforall.org.uk](mailto:hilary@classicsforall.org.uk)

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Maguire, J. and Hunt, S. (2014) The North Walsham Latin Cluster Group: two case studies. *Journal of Classics Teaching*, 30.

Maguire, J. (2012). North Walsham Cluster Latin Project. The first year (2011–12). *Journal of Classics Teaching*, 26.

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<sup>1</sup>The London boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Hackney, Havering and Redbridge, Newham, and Tower Hamlets.