The Glitterlings

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I started my career in Brent and I remember the playground being a vibrant place, full of languages and cultures that colourfully overlapped. The first time I was on duty my ears wibbled and wobbled. The school respected and celebrated diversity, and pupils’ cultural knowledge experiences and mother-tongue languages were viewed as precious resources. Whether you have 30 languages in your school or just a handful, our respect for diversity means we’re all international schools now – but do we all teach through a multilingual lens? Inclusivity is not optional but an essential component in nurturing respect for all, building a sense of belonging to a common humanity and helping learners become responsible and active global citizens. The building blocks for a better world start in early years through translanguaging and the ability of children to shuttle between languages to formulate a tapestry of words, understanding and deeper meaning. Translanguaging simply means receiving information in one language and using or applying it in another language.*

Now I’ve found a groundbreaking programme that has a clear focus upon multilingualism and internationalism to support English language learning and promote pupils’ home language skills. The Glitterlings is an interlingual story and play-based course aligned to the EYFS Framework, and works by allowing child and teacher to learn from each other.

This twinkling and critical-thinking programme features the eponymous Glitterlings: inquisitive and gregarious hyperpolygot savants that come from two stars left of the moon. They love learning languages and cultures and aspire to be polyglots themselves, and fit seamlessly into the ecology of an interlingual classroom.

The Glitterlings programme. Authors: Eithne Gallagher and Miranda Walker

Verdict:
Languages for all
Polyglots are sorely underrated in the UK as the ubiquity of English has made foreign-language learning almost redundant. But the Glitterlings can change that by helping children to tune in to pluralism, actively listen to the world around them, and see polyglotism as an achievable and natural way of being – rather than an impossible feat reserved for an intelligent few. Byron was described as a ‘monster of languages’; well, the Glitterlings can help make language monsters of early learners by tapping into their colossal potential and capacity to learn. It’s a resource that promotes world citizenship through diversity, open-mindedness and respect, helping children to develop the linguistic security and identity investment they need to be successful – and all at very little cost to your budget!

* These ideas and concepts form the basis of the groundbreaking Glitterlings programme. Authors: Eithne Gallagher and Miranda Walker