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*'Bonjour, mes choux! J'ai de bonnes nouvelles.
Nous allons jouer au football en France!'*

Mr Davies beamed out at the seven children sitting in front of him in the classroom. Together, they made up the little league football team Bad Boyz. As well as being the children's teacher at school, Mr Davies was the Bad Boyz manager. At this moment, his team were all gaping back at him as if he'd just grown purple fins.

'Eh?' grunted Kyle, the Bad Boyz keeper, at last.

'Are you all right, sir?' enquired Dareth, the team's skipper. 'Would yer like some water or sumfing?'

Mr Davies shook his head. 'I was speaking French,' he explained.

'Oh yeah, *bonjour*,' Jordan nodded. 'I know that. I saw it tagged on a wall in town somewhere.' Jordan was very keen on graffiti.

Her tagging exploits had got her into a lot of trouble in the past.

‘It means ‘good day’,’ said Mr Davies: ‘ ‘hello’’

‘Ello,’ Dareth responded with a broad grin.

Mr Davies ignored him. ‘I was telling you that I had some good news,’ he went on. ‘We’re going to play football in France.’

‘In France?’ squeaked Bloomer, his cheeks flaring pink. ‘That’s ... well ... it’s ... not in this country, is it?’

‘Duh, well done, Bloomer!’ Jordan scoffed. ‘Of course it’s not in this country. It’s a completely *different* country.’

‘We’re going to France, we’re going to France!’ exclaimed Max dramatically, and he banged his head down on the desk in a pretend faint.

Sung-Woo put up his hand.

‘Yes, Sung-Woo?’ said Mr Davies.

Sung-Woo frowned. ‘I no understand,’ he muttered seriously, ‘why you say hello to your shoe.’

‘Yeah, you did, sir,’ piped Bloomer. ‘You said ‘bonjewer my shoe.’’

‘*Bonjour, mes choux,*’ Mr Davies corrected

him. 'It's a term of endearment the French use. It means 'Hello, my cabbages!'

'Eh? You what?' Kyle uttered. 'We ain't cabbages.'

'No,' agreed Bloomer shrilly, 'we're not vegetables.'

'We aren't,' said Jordan, '*you are.*'

'No, we all are,' said Max surprisingly.

'What d'yer mean?' Kyle demanded. His podgy face crinkled like a deflating beach ball.

'Well, we're human *beans*. Get it?' Max declared. He rolled his eyes and stuck out his tongue.

Everyone laughed except Sung-Woo, who looked more confused than ever.

'It was a joke, Sung-Woo,' said Mr Davies. He raised his eyebrows at Max. 'And not a very good one. Now let's get back to the subject ... The Appleton Little League has a link with a similar league in France. They've invited us, as little league champions, to go to France to play two matches against the winners of their league. A sort of continental championship, I suppose. What do you say to that?' His gaze fell on Sadiq.

‘Sadiq, you’ve been very quiet,’ he said. ‘What do you think?’

Sadiq was rarely slow in voicing his opinion to teachers – or anyone else, come to that. It had often got him into detention. Today, though, he had been unusually silent.

‘Yeah, it sounds all right,’ he said without enthusiasm.

‘All right?’ queried Mr Davies. ‘Is that the best you can do?’

Sadiq shrugged. ‘It sounds good,’ he ventured, but still without real enthusiasm.

‘It sounds wicked,’ Dareth asserted. ‘I’ve never been to France.’

‘Have any of you ever been abroad?’ Mr Davies asked. ‘Apart from Sung-Woo.’ Sung-Woo had come from Korea less than a year ago.

‘I been to Spain,’ said Jordan.

‘Me too,’ squawked Bloomer.

‘I been to Greece,’ said Max. ‘Grease Lightning,’ he sang, and started to jig around in a weird kind of dance.

Mr Davies raised his eyes again. ‘Anyone else?’ he prompted.

Dareth put up his hand. 'I've been to Iceland,' he said. He ran his hand over his cropped head and grinned. 'Me gran gets her frozen sausages there.'

Mr Davies shook his head and sighed.