

The Quality of Education: Modern Foreign Languages - Purpose and Provision



St Christopher's:
A Church of England Academy

That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither-
whatever they do prospers.

Psalm 1:3

“A different language is a different vision of life.”

Federico Fellini

The MFL Department is committed to ensuring that all pupils and students develop the skills and confidence to understand our multicultural society and to use their skills to communicate in the wider world effectively, therefore learning how to live well together. We aim to create resilience in our learners and foster a lifelong love of languages, through a variety of teaching methods and activities. The department works collaboratively, in planning and through sharing ideas and resources to ensure that there is consistency within the MFL classroom. The skills of listening, reading, writing, speaking and translation are practised on a regular basis with all classes in all key stages, helping to develop a love of the language they are studying. Pupils are given opportunities to listen to, read and respond to a range of material, including literary and authentic texts, encouraging them to eventually read independently in the target language. They also develop the ability to transcribe single words and short sentences. Our teaching encourages them to express and develop their ideas clearly in their own written and spoken work, including a wide range of vocabulary, as well as giving and justifying opinions. They learn to speak with increased confidence, initiating and developing conversations, with a focus on clear pronunciation and good intonation, in order to equip them with the knowledge and confidence to use their language skills with native speakers and in real life situations. In written work, accurate spelling and punctuation are also key. The necessary grammar structures are taught explicitly, as these provide the foundations for language learning. This enables pupils to identify and use key tenses in all three time frames (past, present and future), as well as manipulating key grammatical structures, including idiomatic expressions. Although the curriculum is delivered through themes, our emphasis is firmly based around the acquisition of transferable skills and language, thus enabling pupils to use a variety of structures and vocabulary in a range of different contexts.

Complementing the School Purpose

Foundation Scripture

Pupils tend to flourish in the early days of learning a language, but when difficult grammar concepts and structures, which they cannot relate to their own native language, are introduced, there is a tendency among some to become demotivated. Learning a language is a lifelong journey, and although our pupils and students may come across difficult parts in this journey, when they feel like they may be withering, we aim to provide them with the encouragement that they need to continue their journey and blossom into competent linguists

Key Themes

The very nature of learning another language encompasses the theme of learning how to live well together, through learning about other countries and their customs and cultures. We aim to provide our pupils with opportunities to experience the wider aspects of language learning through extra-curricular trips and visits, clubs, and also by teaching them about key festivals and traditions in the countries of the languages they are studying.

Christian Virtues

Through our exchange and penfriend programmes, pupils embrace the virtue of friendship. Such friendships formed often last a lifetime, and many of our past pupils have maintained contact with their penfriends into their adult lives. We believe that all pupils from all backgrounds should be given opportunities to learn and achieve and that nobody should be excluded from extra-curricular activities due to a lack of funds.

Curriculum Aims

We are moving towards a 'teaching backwards' approach in KS3, by starting with what the end objective is for each topic/module and then working backwards. This approach also involves regular retrieval practice to ensure that skills, structures and vocabulary are firmly embedded into pupils' long-term memory.

The Provision of Study

“Learning another language is not only learning different words for the same things, but learning another way to think about things.”

Flora Lewis

The current curriculum model for MFL was introduced in September 2016 after much consultation in order to boost recruitment for GCSE and improve levels of progress.

- Y7-8:** All pupils study three hours of French per fortnight. The top sets in both X and Y bands study an additional three hours of German. The other sets (with the exception of X4) study an additional three hours of Spanish per fortnight.
- Y9:** Pupils choose to specialise in one language and have three hours of lessons per fortnight.
- Y10-11:** Pupils choose whether or not to continue with their Y9 language into Y10 and Y11 for GCSE.
- Y12-13:** Students follow the Edexcel A-level specification in all three languages and have nine hours of study per fortnight.

Pupils are set target grades based on their FFT data, and these are broken down into end of year targets for each stage of their language learning.

In KS3 pupils follow a carefully designed SoW which firmly embeds all the necessary skills, vocabulary and grammar structures, starting each new module with a 'BIG' text and a knowledge organiser, which aim to show pupils the end goal at the start. This provides pupils with a clear model.

In Y10-11 pupils follow the AQA SoW which prepares them thoroughly for the demands of the GCSE exam and lays the foundations for further study of their chosen language.

The MFL department endeavours to make learning languages fun and meaningful, providing students with opportunities for both collaborative and independent work in each lesson. The departmental marking policy is based around 'what went well, 'even better if, and 'next steps' statements, which provide pupils with constructive feedback on their work. Time is regularly built into lessons to enable pupils to act on this feedback, and therefore improve their work.

Complementing the School Provision

We actively promote MFL outside the classroom, through a variety of activities, including a foreign film club, overseas trips and exchanges, competitions and day trips. MFL is promoted across the school through cross-curricular projects such as the European Week of Languages, Spirituality Week, Numeracy and Literacy. For example, pupils learn to tell the time in their respective languages, how to understand the Euro currency so that they are able to use it effectively when they travel to other European countries in the Euro zone, all of which involve practising numeracy skills. Numeracy in MFL is also practised through the weekly numeracy challenges which include problems in French. With regard to literacy, explicit links are made during lessons linking grammatical points such as tenses to English.

The department works hard to meet the needs of all pupils, regardless of their background or ability, both within and outside the classroom. We are keen to encourage them to participate in extra curricular activities such as residential trips, whether that be through financial support to disadvantaged pupils or actively supporting SEN pupils through providing extra staff on a one to one basis on trips where needed.

Our departmental marking policy makes pupils more reflective, resilient and ready to take on new challenges through responding to feedback. This involves a 'what went well', 'even better if' and 'next steps' approach, encouraging pupils to reflect on what they have done well, and also how they can improve this particular piece of work and subsequent tasks.

“One should not aim at being possible to understand but at being impossible to misunderstand.”

Marcus Fabius Quintilian

Pupils in KS3 are assessed through end of module assignments, which are graded in line with GCSE criteria.

Regular assessments using the GCSE and A-Level marking criteria are carried out for all pupils/students in order to gauge their progress. Through individual and whole class feedback, pupils learn how to improve their work, and to learn from theirs and others' mistakes and successes. Improvement and reflection time (DIRT) is built in to MFL lessons in order to allow pupils to act on such feedback, and helps identify clear targets for improvement. Outstanding work is showcased on our 'MFL – Most Fabulous Linguists' board on the MFL corridor, and departmental news and pupils' achievements within the department are highlighted on the 'Department News' board, also located on the MFL corridor.


Detailed analyses of pupil performance at GCSE and A-level are undertaken every year, in order to pinpoint any areas for improvement. These analyses are used to inform future planning, teaching and learning and therefore maximise pupil progress.

Teachers ensure that pupils feel confident to contribute in lessons, through the use of praise, peer work and peer assessment, and that they are rewarded for doing so. They are taught that making mistakes is all part of the learning process. Support is offered both on an informal basis by staff, as and when needed, and also in the form of timetable support sessions at lunchtime or after school.

Ad Gloriam Dei

To the Glory of God



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