Languages

The Languages curriculum is designed to foster our students' inquisitive nature about the wonder of learning another language and the knowledge of other cultures and traditions which goes hand in hand with it.

How is the curriculum planned?

Through learning Languages, students are given a broad understanding of how a language is comprised and learn the fundamental building blocks of grammatical application.
Literacy skills are continually built upon as students work their way from word and sentence level to ever more complex texts of varying forms. Although the curriculum is delivered in a topic-based manner, the four skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing are interwoven throughout.

The knowledge and skills required from the Languages National Curriculum are broken down into distinct themes at both KS3 and KS4. The assessment model we use has Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) which exemplify the key skills which students should know and be able to do at any given point across KS3 and in KS4 the GCSE criteria is then applied and shared.

In years 7 and 8, students cover the basics across a wide range of topics, and then formally start their 3-year GCSE course as from Year 9. Lessons are planned and sequenced according to the GCSE specification and the vocabulary is taught through increasingly complex grammatical structures which are practised and applied through the four skills. Throughout, the key structures and vocabulary are revisited and emphasised so that they are firmly known and memorised so that they can be applied to unfamiliar contexts readily.

To ensure that all students (and especially the disadvantaged) acquire the cultural capital to help them be more successful in the future, languages are offered to all students in KS3 and the vast majority in KS4 because we, as a school, understand the value and importance of languages in our current economic climate. To build upon this, and to give students the opportunity to use their language skills in a real-life scenario, we offer short trips to Boulogne, Paris and Aachen. In addition, Year 8 have the opportunity to participate in a personal development day entitled "Passport to the World" in which students learn about the culture and traditions of other countries around Europe to broaden their horizons. We, as languages teachers, will regularly impart our knowledge and experiences of both living and working abroad to our classes during lessons so students are open to the possibilities which languages can open up for them.

How is the curriculum delivered/taught?

To maximise our students' progress, we utilise a variety of pedagogical approaches when delivering languages lessons, namely

- Knowledge retrieval
- Flipped learning for independent learning - vocabulary acquisition and manipulation - using new vocabulary in context
- Spaced learning
- Oracy
- Walking talking mocks
- Modelling of exam strategy
- Modelling of exemplar answers
- Scaffolding
- Building glossaries
- Use of Technology such as Kahoot and Quizlet

A range of activities and styles are used so that where appropriate interactive tasks and games are built into the learning sequence so that students can manipulate vocabulary and structures to help them understand and embed them into their long-term memory.

There is a focus on excellent questioning which is a valuable strategy used to assess comprehension within the lesson to ensure understanding and to create challenge.

Students are issued with "Personalised Learning Checklists" (PLC's) following key exams so that they can self-identify areas of weakness and focus their revision efforts accordingly. In addition, thorough question level analysis of all assessments allows for identification of gaps in both knowledge and skill. Teachers will also review the analysis and teach subsequent lessons accordingly to address any gaps or misconceptions in the learning.

In order to aid memorisation, vocabulary is constantly revisited through increasingly complex grammatical structures. Furthermore, the use of visual and audio prompts as well as games and competitions helps to build connections and embed vocabulary into the long-term memory. To build on cultural capital, lessons often draw inspiration from authentic texts such as newspapers articles or blogs and indeed the life experiences of teachers themselves. To capitalise on this, students are often sign posted to articles/blogs/magazines/websites of interest so they have the opportunity to read or listen to "real life" information.

After a key piece of work, students are given constructive feedback which allows them to be successful but also focuses on their next steps. Following on from assessment feedback, students are then given time within lessons to reflect on their feedback and to act upon it. Errors in student work are very rarely corrected, but are simply highlighted. Students have to think hard about their errors in order to correct them themselves. In order to achieve this, students are issued with a "common mistakes" sheet on which there will be ten to twelve common mistakes which the class has made in that particular piece of work. This is gone through with the class as a whole who then record the correct sentences. These corrected sentences can then be referred to by the students so they can identify and then correct their own errors.

The importance of languages in our modern society is constantly growing and teachers will take every appropriate moment in lessons to stress the value of having a GCSE in a foreign language for future education and career opportunities. Having a qualification in languages on a CV is incredibly useful and teachers endeavour to get this message across to our students as frequently as possible. Exploring the possibilities of future occupations which involve languages will often take place in class discussions, so students see the real benefits of being able to speak another language.

Chromebook Use

Chromebooks will become an integral part of language teaching and learning, and students will be expected to use them on a regular basis in lessons. Examples of Chromebook use in Languages would be for accessing Online Dictionaries such as wordreference.com or dict.cc, creating and saving KS4 GCSE preparation material in their personal Google Drive area, revision for "End of Topic" assessments using either "Quizlet" or "Kahoot". In addition, the completion of "End of Topic" assessments for both the reading and listening skills will take place on Chromebooks, using Google Forms.

How is the curriculum assessed?

Assessments will take place at the end of every topic and are based around the four skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking. Assessments are based on real GCSE tests and try to mimic these as far as possible, using real GCSE questions as well as specimen questions.

Although assessments are topic-based, every assessment includes at least 2 questions from previously learnt topics to ensure students retain vocabulary using the spaced learning approach. In addition, assessments include a variety of question styles to ensure that students are not only being tested on topic vocabulary but also on their exam strategy.

Assessment results are recorded by both teachers and students to track progress. Students in KS3 tick off attainment statements on their KPI, following key pieces of work and also record results of listening and reading activities in their assessment grids, which are kept in the front of their books. Students enter their marks on an assessment tracker in KS4, which is kept in their folders. Referring to the assessment grids and trackers on a frequent basis allows students to track their progress effectively and pinpoint which skills or topics they need to focus their efforts on.

Teachers register marks from assessments and terminal exams on a DATA tracker which automatically works out the grade and whether the student is on, above or below target, according to their expected grade. Marks from each individual question within assessments are all recorded, so early identification of weakness in answering a certain type of question is evident, as well as a weakness in a certain topic or skill.

Having students engage on a regular basis with their KPI sheets in KS3 and the AQA GCSE mark schemes and grade criteria at KS4, they are able to develop a good understanding of what is required of them at each stage of their language learning journey to reach their expected target grade and beyond. The interlinked use of both self- and peer-assessment is routine in languages lessons helps student to connect successfully with the criteria.

To further students' understanding of the exam grade criteria, an RMI (Review, Mark, Improve) sheet is implemented, following a writing task. This allows students to play the role of the teacher by reviewing an example piece of work by a student, correcting, then marking it according to the grade criteria and then, finally, improving it.

Question level analysis following the assessments informs the subsequent planning of lessons which follows, allowing for any gaps in knowledge to be addressed.