

English Martyrs' Catholic School

French Curriculum Statement

Rationale

Our principal aims are to foster students' curiosity and to deepen their understanding of the world. We strive to develop enthusiasm, engender a love for learning languages and cultivate respect and appreciation for other cultures whilst celebrating cultural differences. Our teaching enables students to express their own ideas and thoughts in another language and to understand and respond to its speakers, both in spontaneous speech and in writing. We provide opportunities for them to communicate for practical purposes, learn new ways of thinking and read literature and appreciate film in the original language. Our curriculum provides the foundations for learning further languages, equipping pupils to become positive and reflective learners who could study or work in other countries. In the department we have a clear appreciation of the need for personalised learning and actively encourage independent research and learning in our students.

Knowledge building; a sequential approach

Taking into account the KS2 curriculum and with collaboration from feeder schools, in KS3 we provide a strong foundation to build on prior learning and to develop new skills and knowledge required to address the curriculum in KS4 and 5. In Year 7 and 8 students acquire deep knowledge in the form of key topic vocabulary and grammatical structures in the four main skill areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing. We enable our learners to access a wide range of vocabulary from the early stages of their learning and to apply grammatical structures successfully. As well as engaging cultural content, intrinsic exam training begins in Year 7 where students are taught to write concise, timed and accurate work to address the rigours of the GCSE exams at a later stage of their learning. Weekly vocabulary drilling prepares students for being able to produce language naturally, developing their own core lexicon on which to build.

In Year 9 students begin their GCSE in French. Our curriculum is designed to foster accurate use of language and its detailed manipulation, through the new themes of learning linked to the GCSE AQA specification. Learning continues to be engaging and deeply-rooted in the Target Language cultures, whilst incorporating the four skill areas (listening, speaking, reading and writing), alongside grammatical structures and vocabulary at both foundation and higher levels. Fundamental grammatical structures and key vocabulary in three timeframes (past, present and future) are a key focus of teaching during this year and having addressed the feedback from GCSE examiners in detail, we are confident that our learners develop the depth of language to meet the exam specification needs and the resilience to express themselves with confidence and spontaneity.

Building skills; teaching approaches

With regular exposure to literary texts of a higher degree of complexity, students are taught to be aspirational. We believe that exposing students to academic language is fundamental and from the start of KS3 our teaching methods enable students to deconstruct higher level reading passages. In our classrooms, interactive resources and effective use of ICT are used to vary teaching and learning and students are engaged in a wide range of activities; language games, pair work, choral repetition, chanting or singing which, whilst fostering enjoyment and love of learning, also develop their confidence and knowledge. Deep learning is ensured with an on-going focus on revising and reviewing of vocabulary and structures and on successful memorisation techniques. Retrieval practice is rigorous and continuous and interleaving is standard in our teaching methods to improve vocabulary retention and memory. Modelling is an essential part of classroom practice to enable students to confidently express themselves in the Target Language.

Serving the needs of all students

Our curriculum impacts positively on the literacy skills of all students as the studying of vocabulary and key grammatical concepts support their understanding of English language. We are committed to improving students' listening and communication skills, their resilience and their independence. The international dimension, to which our whole school is committed, is at the heart of our teaching and students develop an awareness and an understanding of other cultures that is relevant and current. Our aims for all students are challenging and ambitious; it is the scaffolding that is adapted by skilful teaching to suit the levels of all students of all abilities. The linguistic competence of all students is developed and a wide range of vocabulary from a variety of subjects go beyond students' immediate interests as we enable them to discuss wider issues pertaining to global themes.

Focus for change

Teaching is developmental and the department collaborative. Each year in our review of our curriculum we use evidence and data from the previous year to chart progress and identify areas of focus. Each year we make amendments to our curriculum and teaching styles to support our findings and adapt materials accordingly. This year, addressing the GCSE results and using the enhanced results analysis, we are focussing on developing spontaneity in writing and speaking, encouraging independence in both areas.