

Modern Languages at Downlands

Context: Languages are highly valued at Downlands as a key component of the EBACC pathway, as such we have a GCSE entry, which is higher than the national average. Many, but not all of our students are fortunate enough to travel abroad, and many come from homes which are supportive of language learning, however the local area is not particularly multicultural or multilingual. At Downlands students focus on learning one language, to allow for mastery in this language and to avoid cognitive overload.

Our Vision for Language Learning;

Our ambition is for learners to understand the value of language learning in today's global society.

Learners are passionate about language learning and are confident and ambitious linguists, consequently they achieve great outcomes.

There is a rich curriculum, driven by inspiring teaching and cultural experiences. Teaching and Learning focuses on the key pillars of language learning; phonics, vocabulary and grammar, which are mastered through practice, repetition and retrieval.

Curriculum Intent

We are inspired by the belief that language learning is a vital skill, which nurtures not only students' linguistic abilities but also their literacy in their own language and equips them with a range of transferable skills, which promote their emotional, creative and social development, allowing them to be truly global citizens.

We aspire to create a rich, broad and ambitious curriculum, which challenges, engages and motivates all students. Intrinsic motivation to learn a language is enthused by building confidence and a sense of progress, purpose and relevance to the world outside of the classroom.

Our ambition is to enable all our students to;

- ✓ use language skills, productively and receptively, for communication in the real world, for practical purposes, for their immediate needs, interests and beyond and to express and justify opinions;
- ✓ develop their confidence and autonomy to access new and unfamiliar language through the use of decoding skills brought about by the explicit teaching of phonics and sound patterns;
- ✓ work towards becoming a fluent and spontaneous speaker of the language and a linguist of the future.

Our pedagogy is underpinned by a passion for languages, expert teachers and the nurturing of a "can do" attitude, based on *the minimisation of cognitive load, scaffolding and practice*, which in turn creates equity amongst all of our learners. Regular and spaced recycling and retrieval of high frequency vocabulary, verbs and structures across topics and stages has been planned to support the storing of knowledge in the long-term memory. We also aspire to create a learning environment where all learners feel confident to make errors and to learn how to move on from these; the use of low stake assessment opportunities allow for systematic and effective checking of understanding throughout a single lesson or a sequence of lessons.

From the outset, learners are encouraged to use the language for themselves. Language is taught in chunks, with each year of Key Stage three having a key structure focus, which runs as a coherent narrative, minimising cognitive overload and ensuring progression from one year to the next, whilst allowing learners to communicate quicker and more meaningfully.

Phonics are explicitly taught at the very start of key stage three, to allow our students to be autonomous from the outset. These phonics are then systematically returned to from here on in. The vocabulary taught is planned across the key stages and at lesson level as chunks to be delivered alongside the key grammatical structures. These core principles are then revisited and recycled, through retrieval challenges, reading, listening and speaking tasks in each lesson thereafter. Key Stage 3 has a specific focus on asking and answering questions, with students building their communicative and productive skills, whilst increasing their intrinsic motivation. There is more emphasis on scaffolded use of written and spoken language in Key Stage three; read aloud tasks, translation etc, to minimise cognitive overload, whilst allowing skills and confidence to grow. As we move from Key Stage three to four, these scaffolds are carefully removed; complex structures are introduced alongside more creativity and extended, unsupported responses from students, therefore allowing for promoted outcomes.

From Key Stage three to four, our self-designed curriculum is vertically integrated to allow for progression across the three pillars, as well as through topics, which act as hooks for students to hang their knowledge on. Topics are planned, so that phonics, vocabulary and grammar build from one to the next, developing in both depth and breadth. We recognise that students arrive from primary school with a varied background of language learning, so our key stage three vocabulary and grammar is planned to allow all students to make progress despite their starting point, with us building on the language learning skills that students have already acquired. Throughout Key Stage 3, we begin with topics, which are closer to the learner's own world and as their confidence and skill base grows, we progress into the world around them. These topic areas are revisited in more depth at Key Stage 4, where we also model and practice exam skills, continuing our promotion of excellent outcomes.

Students leave Downlands with a greater understanding of their own language and a greater understanding of other cultures. They are able to use a language in context and are equipped with the skills needed to progress their learning in their target language or in any other language, that they may wish to pursue.