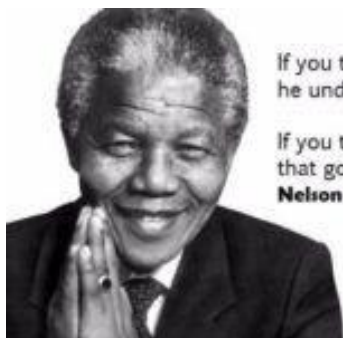


Subject Curriculum Intent: Modern Foreign Languages

Definition of Subject:



If you talk to a man in a language
he understands, that goes to his head.

If you talk to him in his language,
that goes to his heart.

Nelson Mandela

- At a surface level learning a language is about being able to communicate orally and in writing across an ever-expanding number of contexts applying comprehensible phonics and a variety of grammatical structures.
- At a deeper level it involves the ability to communicate across linguistic, cultural, social, political and economic boundaries. It gives power to teach and to learn. "It encourages pupils to appreciate and celebrate difference." (OfSTED 2021)

Nature of Subject:

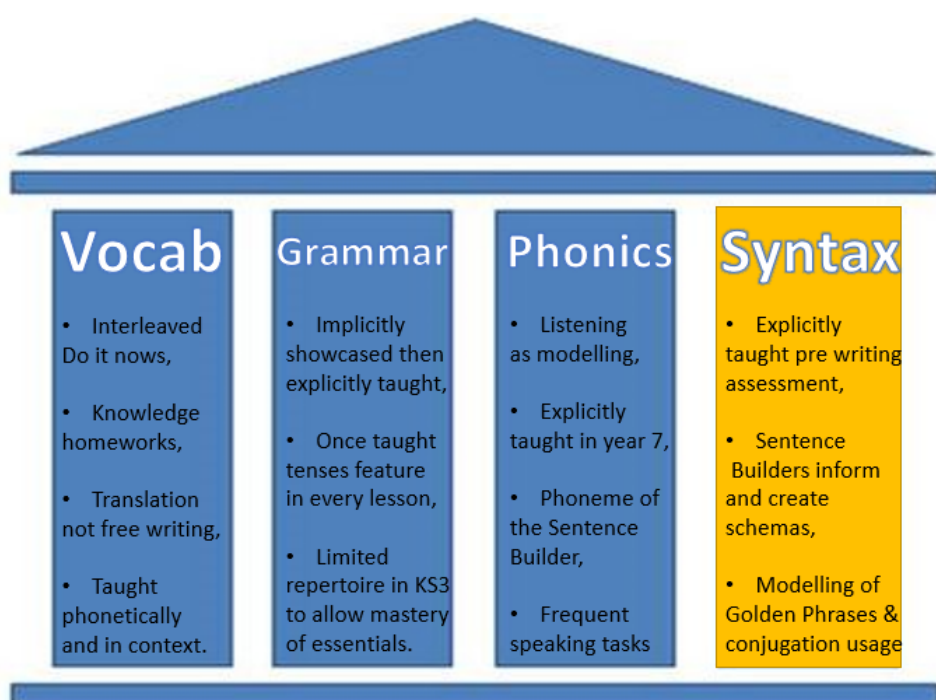
- There are 4 core pillars of teaching languages, all of which need to be intertwined and rely on each other for mutual support.
 - Vocabulary: Learning vocabulary is the Declarative and Substantive knowledge of MFL, without a range of vocabulary both specific to taught contexts and high frequency terminology the students cannot progress. Students need to be taught how to learn vocabulary independently for homework and a thorough spaced practice system needs to be put into place to help long term retrieval.
Items of vocabulary should neither be taught in isolation (Conti; 2017) nor should they be taught without an understanding of their phonemes (NCELP; RfTP; 2019). In fact, a phonetic understanding and chunking supports long term vocabulary acquisition and ability to use the vocabulary in context (Schmitt et al. 2004).
There is a deep need for students to feel successful in their learning (OfSTED; 2021) and this should come as soon as possible in the lesson and begin with successful recall.
Pupils should have a wide range of vocabulary in order to be able to describe their opinions, feelings, experiences and hope and dreams precisely. It is not enough to simply only say that they go to the cinema and beach and to describe everything as fun, interesting or boring!
 - Grammar: a working knowledge of the grammar of the target language is what allows students to create written prose independently. It is one of the keys parts of MFL's procedural knowledge. Students need explicit

teaching of grammar but only after extensive modelling (Conti & Smith; 2019).

Once taught key grammatical points such as verb conjugations, tenses, opinions and connectives pupils need to have these constantly reemphasised and revised across different contexts. There needs to be significant meaningful practice to embed these concepts. (NCELP; PftGiaFL; 2019, Ashbee; 2021).

One of the key threshold principles is the ability to communicate in past, present and future tenses. In terms of grades these are essential skills to get a pass and in terms of real life language use it would be a significant issue to not be able to discuss past experiences, or future aspirations.

- Phonics: Although everyone agrees that phonics is an essential part of learning a second language “there is little strong evidence to support one prescribed order of learning sound-spelling relations” (OfSTED; 2021). However, what is clearly critical is that it is important that students have extensive experience of hearing the sound before production (Conti & Smith; 2019) but that phonics need to be explicitly taught (NCELP RfTP; 2019).
- Syntax: Once students have acquired the substantive and declarative knowledge of vocabulary, the procedural knowledge of grammar and the phonological understanding behind correct pronunciation then students need to be able to produce the language in independent pieces of writing. This is an often-overlooked part of the MFL curriculum, with teachers assuming this implicit expert knowledge. However, it is vital that these skills are modelled to support learners. (EEF; 2018)



Purpose of Subject

Modern Foreign Languages are uniquely important, not only can they contribute to an individual's earning potential and that of the nation (British Council; 2016, OfSTED 2021) but more importantly they allow individuals to connect, to share, to grow, to love and laugh. Proficient language skills are vital for understanding a culture and its people. Languages are also a clear manifestation of pride in a culture; see the growing prevalence of Welsh, Catalan, Breton or Basque to highlight regional culture or the growth the sometimes-incomprehensible language young people use to emphasise youth culture to the exclusion of middle-aged teachers!

Speaking a language is more than EBACC numbers, MALQ questionnaires or earning potential. The ability to interact with those that you meet throughout life from different backgrounds or even to travel to those countries or cultures allows us to grow richer in memories, experiences, tastes and relationships. Nothing is more important than that! Speaking a language can help in any walk of life. Speakers of a foreign language will often find careers not only in translation and interpretations but also in business, journalism, civil service, sports agency, tourism & hospitality, intelligence agencies, diplomacy, or even air traffic control.

Implementation

In order to implement we have 12 guiding philosophies within the curriculum.

1. A careful sequence of building blocks across Key Stages
2. Non-intimidating interleaved starts to lessons
3. Support for all students with sentence builders
4. Using golden phrases to extend learners from year 7
5. Using teachers as models
6. Explicit teaching of phonics and grammar
7. Using homework for vocabulary memorisation
8. Support for adaptive teaching
9. Built in cultural opportunities
10. Translation not free writing
11. A clear grammatical arc per learning cycle
12. Strategic assessment to monitor learning and retrieval

1) A well sequenced spiral curriculum

Learning is built on previous learning. Each year group covers appropriate areas of the national curriculum, building on previous topics and explicitly teaching cross topic skills. For example, students learn about giving opinions in the context of school subjects. This knowledge is then reused in different contexts such as giving opinions on different free time activities.

The curriculum sequence is built around a set of themes. These are: relationships and free time, area and holidays and work and school. Each theme is taught to each year group once a year, using each learning cycle for a theme. New content is taught by end of January in Year 11 to allow the rest of the year to focus on building fluency/automaticity, application and recall.'

2) Do it now strategy that supports engagement and recall

Do it nows are designed to test recent vocabulary, verb conjugation (once learnt in year 7) and translation on a previous topic. The recent vocabulary is multiple choice to remind students of previous key terms or vocabulary that might be tricky to keep in long-term memory. The conjugation is a verb that is useful for the upcoming lesson. The translation is interleaving previous topics.

It is essential that these starters ensure that students' first experience of language learning is positive and achievable; it is deliberate that this might be at the expense of serious challenge.

The starters for year 10 and 11 lessons are adapted by the class teacher to fit the needs.

3) Support for all students with sentence builders

Sentence builders are regularly used in Key Stage 3 to support those with low confidence in the production of target language. Each learning cycle will be based on up to five sentence builders that will be shared with students at the beginning of the learning cycle. Sentence builders are available for students to use in lessons but not in assessments. Students are encouraged to commit them to memory and become more independent of them over time. Sentence builders are used at teacher discretion in Key Stage 4.

4) Using golden phrases to extend learners from year 7

Golden phrases are regularly shared with the students as part of the lesson objectives. The same golden phrases are used throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 and repeated frequently. These phrases are also permanently displayed within the classroom. These phrases enable students of all ages to extend their work creatively and within increasing complexity and sophistication.

5) Using teachers as models

When introducing a new topic area in key stage 3, the teacher will share a sentence builder and then spend at least one whole lesson, doing exercises that involve them modelling correct language use and the engaging student in structured listening activities. For at least one lesson, students will not be expected to show written comprehension or produce any target language of their own. This is to support accurate phonic understanding and verbal confidence.

Additionally, the lesson before any writing task is given teachers model their own writing process, explicitly discussing, giving opinions, sophisticated vocabulary, accurate tenses, linking ideas including golden phrases and anything else pertinent to that topic.

6) Explicit teaching of phonics and grammar

This follows section 5. When the teacher has completed the modelling phase, the grammar and/or phonetic learning points within the sentence builders are directly and explicitly taught. This is to embed the knowledge further for less able students and to extend rules for the more able.

7) Using homework for vocabulary memorisation

Homework supports vocab memorisation through getting students to translate from English into the target language and vice versa.

Homework also supports developing a wide range of vocabulary and linking it together in chunks.

Students follow the whole school policy if homework is not completed.

8) Support for adaptive teaching

The schemes of work and lesson resources are written to provide good quality lessons that are intended to be adapted for the needs of specific classes. The schedule of content is therefore flexible, although assessment weeks must be adhered to.

Teachers can use their professional judgement (in conversation with their Head of Department) to adjust and prioritise sections of the scheme of work for their students' individual or group. Especially in key stage 3 there is a generous amount of time given to cover the topics in each learning cycle with contingency built in to give teacher flexibility. This is to help students to master the content and want to continue with further study of languages.

Planning for year 11 takes a different form. This is because the focus of the year is to build fluency, automaticity and a greater mastery of the scheme content. Teachers identify and improve the topics, grammar and skills gaps that are specific to their groups.

9) Built in cultural opportunities

In each learning cycle, we aim to build in opportunities to use the language in a real life context. This may involve reviewing a target language film, online shopping, researching a festival and other opportunities. There are also opportunities to translate texts that focus on aspects of the target language culture in years 7 & 8 and to research aspects after assessments in the same year groups.

10) Translation not free writing

Students will be asked to translate into and out of the target language in order to build their writing ability focusing on accuracy and chunks. The majority of activities involve students writing in the target language through translation task in order to ensure a breadth of vocabulary use.

In addition, translation is prioritised over free writing because when students free write they default to simple vocabulary and structures and there is often interference from their first language. However, opportunities and support is given for students to write creatively.

11) Clear grammatical arc

Each learning cycle will have a clear grammatical arc to allow for procedural knowledge to be revisited promptly after first teaching and to be built on sequentially. Grammar will not be taught haphazardly, eg. Doing a bit of key verbs, then opinions, then genders, then conjugations.

12) Strategic assessment to monitor learning and retrieval

Low stakes assessments to take place at the end of each sentence builder in Key Stage 3. These have multiple choice questions to identify knowledge gaps and areas of expertise, recall of prior knowledge, translation tasks to evaluate if the knowledge can be applied, and one a key skill (phonics, listening, reading, and grammar). There will also be an end of learning cycle assessment that assesses writing skills. These writing skills have a mark scheme designed to make areas of expertise and areas to improve explicit to staff and students.

Extension of Subject

As previously mentioned languages are the key to cross cultural communication and as such they carry a huge amount of cultural capital. The hinterland knowledge of the

taste of camembert or churros when learning about food; the game of pétanque or jai alai when discussing favourite sports in a French lesson is, listening to the music of Camille or Shakira, seeing the art of Monet or Picasso, gasping at the nature in Costa Rica or Réunion is incredibly powerful. The hinterland knowledge of a culture's art, festivals, geography, history, foot and leisure not only add interest, motivation, intrigue and fascination but an outstanding relevance.

However, we must ensure that this hinterland knowledge does not interfere or distract from the core knowledge of the MFL curriculum. (Howard and Hill; 2020). Curriculum opportunities need to be finely balanced.

Wherever possible it is extremely useful to take students to the country of their target language culture. The practicalities and worries about student safety have led to ESW cancelling exchange visits in the past, however we look to work collaboratively on immersion experiences.

Further Reading:

Ashbee: "Curriculum, Theory, Culture and the Subject Specialisms" 2021

British Council: "Language Skills 'more vital than ever'" 2016

Chartered College of Teaching: "Taking Curriculum Seriously" 2018

Conti: "How many words should you teach a lesson" 2017

Conti & Smith: "Breaking the Sound Barrier" 2019

EEF: "Metacognition and Self-Regulated Learning Guidance Report" 2018

Howard and Hill "Symbiosis: the curriculum and the classroom" 2020

NCELP: "Meaningful Practice: Definitions, Rationales and Principles" 2019

NCELP: "No-Go Pedagogy" 2019

NCELP: "Principle of Teaching Grammar in a Foreign Language" 2019

NCELP: "Rationale for teaching phonics" 2019

OfSTED: "Curriculum Research Review Series: Languages" 2021

Schmitt et al.: "Are corpus derived recurrent clusters psycholinguistically valid?" 2004

Smith: "Becoming an Outstanding Languages Teacher" 2017

Smith: "The NCELP Rationale for Teaching Phonics" 2019

The Viva, Studio and Dynamo Textbooks produced by Heinemann