

KS4

Latin GCSE is a subject comprised of three separate elements: Language, Literature and Roman Civilisation. Over the course of year 10 and Year 11, we develop students' knowledge of these three areas. Most students start with no knowledge of the language but with some awareness of Roman culture and civilisation.

Students start the course by learning the Latin language. We do this by following the Cambridge Latin course and its accompanying textbooks and online resources. This is a long-established and effective way of learning the language. The course follows a narrative approach, so that students gradually build up their linguistic knowledge whilst simultaneously following a story about a Pompeian family and learning about Roman civilisation: Roman baths, slavery, religious beliefs, leisure activities and politics. As the course continues, the story develops and widens, taking the students to ancient Egypt and Britain.

As well as learning about the grammar of Latin, students acquire a lot of vocabulary. We have vocabulary tests every two weeks and students use highly effective online apps (mostly Quizlet) to help learn the words. We also talk a lot about English derivations, encouraging students to make connections between ancient roots and modern words.

Translation and comprehension are the key skills in terms of applying the Latin language acquired. We model how to do this and practise as a whole class, in small groups and individually. By the end of Year 10, students should have learnt all the content for Latin language: this includes four different tenses, the subjunctive, the passive and many other grammatical structures. Latin has fewer words than English so these words have to work harder; this means that word endings change depending on what the word is doing or showing. The front of the word does not change and contains the semantic meaning: this is where we can find connections to the English language. For example, a verb ending shows the person and tense and the noun or adjective ending shows person, quantity and function in the sentence. Latin is a very logically organised and written language; some people think that the skills used in solving algebraic equations are the same as those for translating Latin. There is no spoken element to the Latin course so all work is written and we build towards one Language exam (worth 50% of the qualification).

In Year 10, students also cover elements of Roman Civilisation. The topics to study change: this year the GCSE cohort are studying Roman Britain. We learn about life during the occupation, how villas, roads, military camps, bath complexes, palaces and people were shaped by Roman rule. We do this by investigating Roman artefacts, studying translations of Roman texts and researching other sources for information. Students are encouraged to draw their own conclusions about Roman beliefs and ideas, as well as produce cogent arguments about the topics. We discuss and debate different aspects of ancient civilisation and draw parallels with the modern world. Finding similarities and differences between how the Romans lived and how we live now is a fascinating area of learning; we are indebted to the Romans for many things and yet many aspects of their culture and beliefs are troubling to our modern minds. We are lucky that Fishbourne Palace, one of the best preserved and largest Roman sites in the UK, is just along the coast and when possible, we do a trip there with the opportunity of an archaeological session.

In Year 11, we start to study Roman literature. This is an exciting and challenging opportunity for the students to translate and analyse real Roman letters, poetry, accounts and history texts. We cover writers such as Suetonius, Virgil, Ovid and Pliny. The texts are always about a certain topic: the current cohort of students are looking at writing about Roman Magic and Superstition. As well as providing opportunities for literary analysis, the texts give students the chance to read the words of real Romans and what they

thought about witches, werewolves, curses, dreams, death and superstition. Through the study of these letters, poems, biographies and prose extracts, we build a picture of Roman beliefs and compare them to the views of the modern world.

It is worth noting that the Romans who were writing, and whose writing has lasted over time, were members of the wealthy elite. We discuss how therefore we are glimpsing Roman culture through a lens and we discuss the other voices and opinions that we are not able to hear. Students need to be able to translate and also critically comment on these texts, so we explore the methods writers use to convey meaning: how do they structure their work for maximum impact, for example by using crescendo? Why do they choose certain words and images to emphasise their points? As with the other two topics, Literature is examined at the end of Year 11 and we help students revise and practise for this as the year develops, with lots of low-stakes tests, practice questions and revision tools and strategies.

The key skills that we are developing across Latin GCSE are precise translating, inferring meaning, drawing conclusions, making links across cultures and analysing how and why language works. Students also acquire a lot of transferable knowledge: about how languages are constructed, about the ancient world, its beliefs and customs, and about how people used to live in Rome. Latin GCSE combines the skills used in Languages, History and English Literature in one qualification. It is a rich, challenging and rewarding subject.