

MFL - Year 7

We live in a global society and we want our students to be able to embrace all the opportunities open to them. At Blatchington Mill we are passionate about the benefits that learning a language can bring. Such benefits include;

- Broadening students' horizons with regards to understanding different cultures and world views
- Opening doors to the possibilities of travel and living and working abroad
- Enriching students' grammatical knowledge of their own language
- Enabling students to take an analytical approach to the constructs of 'language' and 'culture' and how these two elements shape our understanding of the world we see around us

We strongly believe in languages as a skill for life and as something students should enjoy and find rewarding. Our objective is to enable students of all abilities to develop their language skills to their full potential, equipping them with the knowledge to communicate in a variety of contexts with confidence.

What does the year 7 languages curriculum look like and what is the rationale behind this?

Blatchington Mill School is one of just nine schools in the country that has been given Lead MFL HUB School status in the MFL HUB Scheme, established by the Department for Education in 2018. Being a Lead MFL HUB School means that our team work alongside leading academics, researchers and practitioners from across the country to deliver, develop and disseminate best practice with regards to language teaching, as informed by the most current research and language learning pedagogy.

Our schemes of learning are based around developing students' ability to acquire and develop a mastery of the core areas of

- **vocabulary** (how to remember, recall and understand the meaning of vocabulary)
- **phonics** (how to pronounce and spell words in a language)
- **grammar** (how to recognise and manipulate language according to grammar principles)

Our curriculum is designed around ensuring that students are able to use and manipulate the target language as early as possible. In this way, the **vocabulary** we teach students each week

consists of a range of word classes such as nouns, adjectives, verbs. This then enables students to construct sentences from their very first lesson. The vocabulary we teach is carefully selected

based on how frequently it is used in the target language. The most frequently occurring vocabulary is taught first as research has shown that this increases students' rates of success and motivation.

The learning of **phonics** is equally integral to our curriculum. Through learning to pronounce, spell and recognise the different phonetic sounds, students are able to 'decode' the language in a way that builds both confidence and competence. This, in turn, has a profound impact on students' ability to interact in the target language.

Grammar is the final core principle of our curriculum. Through introducing grammar principles in succinct, concise chunks, we ensure that students' learning is scaffolded. In order to reach a secure and confident level of grammatical knowledge, students undertake meaningful, repeated practice in speaking and writing. Activities set both in the classroom and for homework are aimed at strengthening students' skills in the areas above.

Year 7 Curriculum Content

Our students continue their learning journey with us by exploring the concept of what makes an **effective language learner**. Students therefore build upon their KS2 language learning experience by learning the key skills that will enhance their language learning experience. These include;

- How to learn vocabulary
- How to approach the learning of different phonemes and graphemes
- How to take a non-judgemental and objective approach to learning new grammatical constructs that differ from those of their own native language
- How to use metacognition and a growth mindset to succeed in language learning

Through doing so, this equips students with a toolkit for successful learning both in language lessons and independently. This acts as a set of core skills that students can apply throughout their language learning journey with us and beyond. Once students are aware of the effective approaches to take in their learning we then continue the year 7 curriculum with the learning of the most high frequency vocabulary in the language. This includes:

- verbs
- nouns
- adjectives
- adverbs
- time expressions (temporal markers)
- connectives
- determiners/articles

Students accumulate this vocabulary and learn how to apply it through exploring its pronunciation (through learning the phonetic rules) and its application by mastering the grammatical concepts associated with that vocabulary in a cumulative manner, with the difficulty increasing as students progress through the course. In year 7 we explore the following grammatical concepts in the order below:

- The present tense of common irregular verbs (in all verb forms, beginning with the infinitive and singular forms and later progressing to the plural forms)

- The use of determiners and definite articles
- The use of postnominal and prenominal adjectives
- Adjective agreement
- The present tense of regular verbs (in all verb forms, beginning with the infinitive and singular forms and later progressing to the plural forms)
- The negative form
- Formulating questions
- Modal verbs
- The perfect tense (with regular and irregular verbs-in all verb forms, beginning with the infinitive and singular forms and later progressing to the plural forms)

These concepts have been identified by research conducted by the National Centre for Excellence for Language Pedagogy as being the most effective foundational concepts for providing students with a comprehensive understanding of the constructs of a foreign language. In this way students develop their transferable knowledge for application in later years. The concepts and vocabulary are regularly revisited and practiced throughout the Key Stage Three course in order to ensure that students are able to commit them to long term memory. Therefore students will build upon these concepts and acquire a greater depth of knowledge of their use in years 8 and 9, as well as learn new grammatical principles that require an understanding of this foundational knowledge.

Lesson Content

Each week students explore one of the concepts above and are given ten to fifteen pieces of vocabulary to learn which complement the concept being studied (the nature of which is laid out in the independent learning section below). Just one grammatical concept is covered each week in order to ensure that students have fully embedded their learning of the grammar principle through carrying out targeted, repeated practice. The learning of each grammatical concept is therefore divided up into a sequence of three lessons. Across the three lessons students undertake the following activities in the order they appear below:

- Students are given the new vocabulary set to learn independently for homework for the learning sequence the following week
- Students are introduced to the *meaning and form* of the new vocabulary (students should already be familiar with the direct translation of this vocabulary as they will have been set the task of learning it for homework)
- Students explore and practice the phonetic concept for this vocabulary set
- Students are introduced to the grammatical concept for this learning sequence
- Students practice recognising this concept using the new vocabulary through the receptive modalities of reading and listening in a meaningful context
- Students practice using the grammatical concept and new vocabulary through the productive modalities of writing and speaking in a meaningful context
- Students undertake a vocabulary test on the new vocabulary for this learning sequence to ensure that they have accumulated the vocabulary before moving on to the next learning sequence

How does independent learning support our curriculum?

The most beneficial independent learning that students can do in order to strengthen their language learning is to **learn as much vocabulary as possible**. In order to access the top grades 7-9 in a language GCSE, students must learn a minimum of 2000 words by the end of year 11. Research has shown that learning vocabulary effectively can have as much as a 50% difference on students' outcomes at GCSE. Furthermore, students' confidence increases with the amount of vocabulary that they accumulate and the depth of their understanding of this vocabulary (e.g. direct translation of the term, knowledge of word class and grammatical use). This therefore means that students are increasingly more adept at using, and more motivated to use, the target language in written and spoken form. This confidence continues to grow in turn as students progress into years 8 and 9 and they accumulate yet more vocabulary that is less common in its frequency and is more complex. This ultimately leads to students being confident, proficient language learners who are highly motivated to speak in the target language and engage with native speakers of that language.

Therefore, for each year group, each week, we set a vocabulary learning homework of between ten and fifteen words on which students are tested. In order for students to commit this vocabulary to long term memory we also revisit vocabulary from previous weeks and this is often added to the new vocabulary. The vocabulary is provided to students on a 'core language' sheet which contains the English translations of the vocabulary. The words are also placed onto the interactive online learning website 'Quizlet' each week, which is a very effective tool for students to use when learning vocabulary independently and at home. The tool provides students with digital flashcards from which to learn the vocabulary and then tests them in a variety of formats across each of the four skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening. In order to ensure that all of our students are making effective progress in vocabulary tests we have a benchmark figure of 60%. Should a student not achieve 60% in a vocabulary test we will ask that they retake the test the following lesson, with support from their teacher following a reminder of the best strategies for vocabulary learning.

Examples of these strategies may include;

- learning the vocabulary across the four modes of reading, writing, speaking and listening
- practising the vocabulary regularly and in short intervals-ideally every two to three days for approximately half an hour each time