

Year 8

What does the Year 8 Languages curriculum look like and what is the rationale behind this?

The year 8 curriculum builds upon the foundational language principles learned in year 7. There is a natural progression for students from year 7 into year 8 as the core three principles through which they are taught remain the same:

- **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)

The **vocabulary** we teach students each week continues to consist of a range of word classes such as nouns, adjectives and verbs. Frequency remains the driving factor behind our choice of vocabulary, with the most frequent vocabulary being taught first as this is the most effective vocabulary for students to accumulate in order to be successful. The vocabulary taught in year 8, however is less high frequency vocabulary as students will have learned the most frequent vocabulary in the foreign language in year 7. Most words covered in Year 7 fall into the category of the 500 most frequently used French words. In Year 8 (and indeed into Year 9) these become more obscure. In Year 8 the vocabulary learned is largely in the 500 - 1,000 bracket. In this way students progress from one year to the next in their ability to recognise words and phrases in texts that are more complex and use less commonly occurring vocabulary, as well as use more complex language in their own speech and writing.

The learning of **phonics** also remains 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. In year 8, the phonetic sounds explored in lesson are sounds students should already be familiar with from year 7. Therefore they are revised to ensure that students have committed these sounds to long term memory and are also explored 'coincidentally' as they appear in texts or listening passages that students read or listen to in lessons. This ensures that students have a secure knowledge of the pronunciation, recognition and spelling of this vocabulary. This process of consolidation and embedding ensures that students progress in their speed of recall of vocabulary and their recognition of lexical items. This is of particular use with students' listening and speaking skills where they must recognise vocabulary and recall it spontaneously.

Grammar remains the final core principle of our curriculum. Through introducing grammar concepts in succinct, concise chunks, we ensure that students' learning is scaffolded. An example of this can be found in the teaching of verb conjugation. Instead of teaching the whole paradigm of a verb, instead we teach only two forms of the verb at the same time. This reduces the cognitive load placed upon students and ensures that the learning of each verb form is fully embedded. The grammar concepts explored in year 8 build upon and use students' prior grammatical knowledge from year 7. In this way students learn more complex and challenging grammar rules and concepts. Students undertake regular practice of these concepts in meaningful contexts both in the classroom and independently for homework in order to improve their automaticity (the speed and fluidity with which they are able to recall and use the grammar concepts). With the continued targeted practice of the grammar

concepts and vocabulary, students are able to recall, recognise and produce language in a manner that is more automatised than previously in year 7.

Curriculum Content

The high frequency vocabulary taught in year 8 includes vocabulary from the word classes found in the year 7 curriculum (seen below in blue) and also includes more complex and less high frequency vocabulary (seen below in green)

- verbs
- nouns
- adjectives
- adverbs
- time expressions (temporal markers)
- connectives
- determiners/articles
- quantifiers/intensifiers
- superlatives
- comparatives
- relative clauses
- prepositions

As in year 7, students will continue to accumulate this vocabulary and learn how to apply it through exploring its pronunciation (through revising the phonetic rules) and its application by mastering the grammatical concepts associated with that vocabulary in a cumulative manner, with the difficulty building from year 7 and increasing as students progress through the course of the academic year. In year 8 we explore the following grammatical concepts in the order below:

- Irregular verbs in the present tense (*in all verb forms and in greater complexity and with greater automaticity from year 7*)
- Possessive adjectives
- Superlative adjectives
- Formulating questions (*in greater complexity and with greater automaticity from year 7*)
- Modal verbs (with infinitives)
- regular present tense verbs (*in greater complexity and with greater automaticity from year 7*)
- The perfect and preterit tenses (*in greater complexity and with greater automaticity from year 7*)
- post and pre-nominal adjectives (*in greater complexity and with greater automaticity from year 7*)
- Partitive article
- Prepositions
- demonstrative adjectives
- Relative clauses

Once explored, the concepts and vocabulary seen above are regularly revisited and practised throughout the year 8 course in order to ensure that students are able to commit them to long term memory. Students will also build upon these concepts and acquire a greater depth of knowledge of their use in Year 9 and at GCSE level. As well as learn new grammatical principles that require an understanding of this knowledge.

Lesson Content

As in year 7, 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. 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 recall, revisit and practice the phonetic concepts 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?

As we saw in year 7, 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 year 8 we therefore once again set a vocabulary learning homework for students to complete each week. The list of vocabulary to learn is between ten and fifteen words long and students are tested on these words each week. In order for students to commit this vocabulary to long term memory we also revisit vocabulary from previous weeks and academic years and these are 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.

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 and practicing the vocabulary regularly and in short intervals-ideally every two to three days for approximately half an hour each time.

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- practising the vocabulary regularly and in short intervals-ideally every two to three days for approximately half an hour each time