



# Whitby School

## Modern Foreign Languages

Whitby has been a doorway to the wider world for centuries. People left its shores to explore and travel to the ends of the earth and now, as one of the most visited places in the United Kingdom, it welcomes people from across the world.

At Whitby School we are passionate about teaching languages because we believe we limit our potential by learning only our native tongue. As a subject it builds mental agility, it helps develop memory, and it builds our appreciation for an understanding of our own language. Learning any language also lays the foundation and skill to learn others.

However, fundamental to our vision as a team is the belief that learning a language is empowering. It allows the citizens of Whitby to continue to be brave, adventurous and outward facing.

Modern Foreign Languages is part of our **World** discipline.

*"I will endeavour to be a person of great **character** who has the **courage** to realise my **ambitions**."*

## Our Intent

<p><b>Courage</b> <b>Brave</b></p>	<p>We recognize that learning a language can seem daunting to some pupils. Speaking a new phrase in another language, even in the classroom in front of peers, requires confidence and a willingness to try something new. Consequently, praise and care in correction of errors is a key part of our practice. The resilience, skills and confidence that children gain make learning a language worthwhile for all.</p>
<p><b>Character</b> <b>Vocal</b></p>	<p>While most lessons will provide a speaking, listening, reading and written task, at Whitby School lessons will often begin with a speaking activity as a key driver to build sentences, vocabulary, and confidence. It also supports our practical approach to language learning. A language is a living thing and in conversation we see it at its most dynamic.</p>
<p><b>Ambition</b> <b>Adventurous</b></p>	<p>In learning a language we build a passion for travel and adventure. This is seen explicitly in our trips to other countries but is at the heart of our subject's values. We teach a language to inspire the children of Whitby to look further – even to the ends of the earth.</p>

## Our teaching:

As a department we recognise that each aspect of language contributes to the three key 'pillars' of language learning:

- **the system of the sounds** of a language and how these are represented in written words
- **vocabulary**
- **grammar and syntax**

These three aspects develop each other. For example, to improve their reading skills pupils need to understand how different combinations of letters map to different sounds, they need to recognise words they have learned, and finally understand how the words are 'glued together' through grammar.

- correct pronunciation and exploration of the **sounds of the language** assist with spelling and the movement from phonemes to graphemes
- our schemes of learning explicitly identify the target **vocabulary** that is needed so that cumulatively as they work through their time at Whitby School, children master the essential

building blocks to language and this involves systematic revisiting of prior vocabulary as part of our teaching in lessons

- our department builds a working knowledge of **grammar** – consequently when pupils encounter new phrases they will, wherever possible and appropriate, learn to manipulate the words and grammar they contain, as soon as possible. This is important so that children are not simply imitating phrases but increasingly ‘thinking in’ and expressing themselves through the language.

To achieve these aims, we include the following components to our lessons and schemes of learning.

- ‘sentence builder’ tasks are used in all lessons, enabling pupils to build accurate sentences and decode the grammar of the target language
- extensive retrieval of language through games and speaking activities
- focus on listening and speaking skills at the start of every unit of work
- explicit teaching of language learning and decoding skills
- regular grammar instruction.

The department aims to use **authentic texts** where possible. In doing so, we aim to build the understanding of how social context affects language use, developing their cultural awareness.

Consequently, over time, children are able to express themselves more articulately in speech and in writing. It helps them to write and speak for different purposes, across a wide range of contexts and for different audiences and so they become ‘alive’ to the language. Our teachers aim to scaffold this through the way they model the target language and prompt pupils to use it in lessons.

We recognise the difficulties each of these three aspects place different demands on learners and to make languages accessible, we consider approaches to each carefully. When speaking, for example, pupils need to be aware of the ongoing shared discourse and respond quickly to new information received – consequently, listening skills become more important. There is also often more time pressure in spoken scenarios. Writing, on the other hand, gives learners time to think about content and how to express it, however spelling becomes a key factor for pupils to consider to keep fluency.

## Use of the target language in lessons

All children learn a new language when they arrive at Whitby School and they do so explicitly with direct language instruction that **balances the use of English and the ‘target’ language they intend to learn**. Naturally we want learners to be exposed to the language they are learning. However, we do not want them to be overwhelmed by it in their early stages of language learning to the point that it could demotivate them. Consequently, we work systematically to achieve a balance that sees using the target language as an essential part of practice and reinforcement, including building familiarity with rhythms, sounds and intonation.

For younger pupils, for example, this will involve the planned use of target language for classroom routines. As children progress, activities will be led in the target language to help embed knowledge in the long-term memory, support practice and recall, and help pupils to respond to language in meaningful ways.

## Our curriculum

Our curriculum has been planned to build mastery of the three key pillars of language:

### **The system of the sounds of a language and how these are represented in written words**

In their language lessons pupils will listen to a variety of forms of spoken language to obtain information and respond appropriately. As they develop their knowledge they will initiate and develop conversations, coping with unfamiliar language and unexpected responses.

While they begin with transactional language to introduce themselves – thereby being introduced to the language - they will move onto reading and comprehension of original and adapted materials from a range of different sources. Ultimately as they move through lower school they will begin to read and listen to texts in the language (such as stories, songs, letters and film), to stimulate ideas, develop creative expression and expand understanding of the language and culture.

### **Vocabulary**

Pupils will develop and use a wide-ranging and deepening vocabulary that goes beyond their immediate needs and interests, allowing them to give and justify opinions and take part in discussion about wider issues. At lower school they begin with their immediate surroundings and experiences before moving into cultural topics and wider contemporary issues such as health and careers.

### **Grammar and syntax**

Pupils will learn to identify and use tenses or other structures which convey the present, past, and future. As with vocabulary, this is carefully matched to content as pupils begin Year 7 in the 'here and now' to introduce themselves and master the simple present. In that first year they will also reflect on previous and future events through their discussion of hobbies, interests, and leisure time. As pupils move through their time at Whitby they will continue to move through tenses continually to develop their expertise until it becomes automatic.

They will also use and manipulate a variety of key grammatical structures and patterns, including voices and moods, as appropriate.

**All children will take languages until Year 9 and all have the opportunity to take it to GCSE.**

## Why do we sequence the curriculum this way?

There is a very careful interplay between the topic, the grammar, and the vocabulary as children move through the languages curriculum.

Our schemes of learning explicitly identify the target vocabulary that is needed so that cumulatively as they work through their time at Whitby children master the essential building blocks to language, which involves systematic revisiting of prior vocabulary as part of our teaching in lessons.

Vocabulary is also linked to grammar - for example, a good verb knowledge is linked to grammatical understanding of verbs. However, the department also teaches and reinforces key grammatical concepts at the appropriate time. For example, revisiting comparatives and superlatives when describing their local area or conditional phrases when talking about their ideal holiday in the future.

These core aspects of content are reinforced through speaking, writing, reading and listening to help them establish mastery through a structured approach and careful use of assessment.

## Our assessment

The curriculum is sequenced carefully so that relevant existing knowledge is revisited through frequent assessment in lessons as part of our 'prepare' activities at the start of each lesson. For each unit, new content is delivered sequentially in increasing difficulty but is segmented into components that are assessed through interim tests so that misunderstandings and errors can be picked up progressively as children progress through that topic.

As a department we take care to consider how errors are corrected to maximise learning. Evidence suggests that focused error correction is usually more effective than unfocused error correction and so teachers will not correct every error that a pupil makes, rather they will focus on agreed aspects, linked to the schemes of learning.

## How we correct errors

As a department, error correction will take place in the following ways:

- **recasting:** re-stating what the pupil said, but correcting errors in it
- **prompting:** where the correction is made by the learner themselves with support
- **explanation:** where explicit information is given about a rule relating to the cause of the error.

As a result, assessment and correction is a dynamic process in languages, happening in the lesson verbally as much as in books. Developing corrections with children prompts them to think about the language they used and to correct the error themselves. Indeed, error correction in both spoken and written language is most effective when done immediately.