

Submission from A Everest, St George's School for Girls

Provision of Modern Languages at St George's: Early Years to S1

For over a decade St George's has been delivering two modern languages in the junior school. We are now at a stage where we can see the impact of that provision in the Upper School (S2-S6).

French

Informal introduction in Nursery

Specialist teacher input from P1 rising to:

P3-5 40 minutes

P6 2 X 40 minutes

P7 3 X 40 minutes

S1 2 x 40 minutes (+ input to language carousel – see below)

Chinese

P4-5 Introduction with specialist teacher (weekly lesson)

P6 1 x 40 minute lesson

P7 1 X 40 minute lesson

S1 Inclusion in language carousel

S1 provision includes the language carousel:

2 x 40 minute lessons in rotation on Spanish, German, Chinese and World French.

S1 students have 2 x 40 minute periods of Latin each week.

At the end of S1, students choose two languages to develop in S2. They choose from Chinese, French, German, Latin and Spanish. Some students opt for three languages at this stage and study one as an extra. Some students choose only one additional language.

Impact

The take-up of French and Chinese beyond S2 is no higher than the take-up of Spanish and German (introduced in S1). Students are excited by the new languages they encounter in S1 and Spanish is now the most popular language as an examination subject. We have not therefore seen the expected pay-off in terms of students choosing to study French and Chinese, even with specialist teachers in the classroom from P1. For those who do choose to study French at examination level, the results are no better than those achieved for Spanish and German.

The advantages of early provision have been:

- an enhanced interest in other cultures
- an excitement about the novelty of a different language at first

Disadvantages:

- linguistic progress has not been enhanced at later stage of school
- Students have become bored: their knowledge of English at Primary level is not sophisticated enough to allow them to access new languages beyond a superficial level.