

Language Policy

Striving to develop students who value
Intellect, Courage and Empathy



BEXLEY
GRAMMAR
SCHOOL
A SPECIALIST LANGUAGE COLLEGE
AN IB WORLD SCHOOL

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BGS Language Philosophy, Beliefs and Aims

At BGS, we view language learning as inherent in all subject areas and acknowledge that all teachers are language teachers regardless of discipline or year level. Our policies and practices endeavour to help students in the developmental process of learning language itself, learning about language and learning through language. This promotes effective communication and leads learners towards understanding and respecting their own and other cultures.

At BGS, we believe that:

- all students and teachers are language learners
- all teachers are language teachers
- language is fundamental to successful learning throughout the curriculum
- language helps us to connect to our home cultures and develop personal identities
- the development and continuation of mother tongue languages are important and crucial to supporting self-esteem and encouraging pride in home culture language acquisition is a life-long process
- the acquisition of intercultural awareness and understanding is crucial to the development of the well-rounded, global citizens that we encourage our students to be

We believe that language acquisition occurs:

- through social and communicative interaction
- when language is presented in meaningful context with comprehensible input (Krashen, 2005, p. 43)
- when students are in comfortable environments with a low affective filter (Krashen, 2005, p. 43)
- by applying the theory of language acquisition

Aims

At BGS, we aim to nurture an appreciation of the wealth and diversity of languages and their cultural heritages. We aim to facilitate international understanding. As language, by its very nature, permeates all areas of the curriculum, every teacher in the school is considered a language teacher. We therefore endeavour to integrate students' cultural and linguistic heritage so as to develop their appreciation and understanding of their own cultural identity. We believe that the acquisition of more than one language, in conjunction with the mother tongue, enriches students' cognitive growth, intercultural awareness and understanding as well as their emotional stability. We therefore strive to foster the ability to communicate with precision, clarity and confidence in at least two languages on a range of issues which encompass the personal, social, local, global, emotional and cultural. We encourage all students to assume the responsibility of being life-long language learners.

BGS Language Profile

Who we are

Bexley Grammar School is a school that currently caters for approximately 1400 students from the ages of 11 to 18. Our students come from diverse international backgrounds and speak nearly 50 different languages. 50% of our students are categorised in an ethnicity other than White British.

English is the mother tongue for the majority of students. Nevertheless, approximately 20% of the student body speak English as an additional language. All of our administrative and teaching staff speak English fluently and approximately 27 speak at least another language fluently.

By sharing experiences among this community, we aim to develop individuals who understand and respect others and have the language skills and attitudes to work together to create a more just and peaceful world in the future.

Admissions Policies

Please see the BGS admissions policy. Parents/carers are asked to tick if English is their first language on the admissions form.

BGS Language Policy

Purpose

The language policy is intended to be a working document that outlines our school's linguistic and academic goals and defines the programmes designed to help our students achieve these goals. This policy provides an overview of the guiding principles for language learning at BGS which permeate the whole school curriculum in a culturally rich environment.

Mission

Striving to develop students who value Intellect, Courage and Empathy

The BGS Ethos is the foundation for our language policy. As language forms the basis for all learning, this policy is critical for helping the school to achieve its mission. The language policy aspires to fulfil each aspect of the Ethos as follows:

Intellect: The language policy encourages students to become articulate communicators in both their mother tongue and in their chosen acquired languages. It aspires to multilingualism through the diversity of language choice / instruction and recognises the cognitive and higher order thinking skills required to transfer meaning between languages and explore concepts, ideas and issues that have a local and global significance. The policy aims to develop reflective learners, who are able to assess and understand their strengths and limitations in order to support their language learning.

Courage: The language policy promotes risk-taking students, who approach unfamiliar situations with courage and forethought and are able to respond to them in both their mother tongue and acquired languages. It aims to foster a natural curiosity and independence of spirit in order to explore new roles, ideas and strategies. It also aims to develop resilience and commitment to the regular learning required to be successful in learning a language.

Empathy: The language policy empowers students to understand, interpret and appreciate their own cultures and to develop cultural empathy so that they appreciate and respond to the perspectives, values and traditions of other communities. It aims to situate students in the international community where they work collaboratively and show compassion and respect towards the needs and feelings of others. In this respect, the policy recognises the equal status of all languages and encourages the development of multiple perspectives of both the host country's culture and language and that of their acquired languages through the mother tongue literacy programme and the Modern Foreign Languages programme.

Roles and Responsibilities

All of our teachers:

- Consider themselves to be language teachers, regardless of the subject or level they are teaching
- Aim to create stimulating learning environments in which students have many opportunities to listen, read, speak and write
- Strive to create authentic opportunities for student-led language inquiries, balanced with teacher-directed instruction
- Aim to make the academic content of our programmes comprehensible by using strategies that reach all students
- View language feedback as an essential form of learning for students as well as an assessment of their learning
- Provide regular information and feedback about student progress to parents and students

The school:

- Provides highly-qualified, internationally-conscious teachers at all levels of the school
- Provides on-going professional development for staff to ensure we keep abreast of latest language research
- Recognises the role of library and media resources and access to global information in language learning
- Strives to keep parents informed of language teaching and learning developments in school, helping them to understand our philosophy and beliefs about language learning across the curriculum
- Uses review processes and external assessments to monitor the effectiveness of the language programme offered at BGS

Students and their families:

- Understand and support the important role an individual's mother tongue plays in overall cognitive development
- Support language learning out of school by finding different, relevant opportunities to practise speaking, listening, reading and writing
- Support language learning out of school by engaging with local communities, regardless of home language, finding ways to communicate our shared humanity

Communication of Language Policy to the BGS Community

The language policy is shared in the BGS community through multiple pathways including staff meetings, PTA meetings and governors' meetings. It is also featured on the BGS website. New staff are familiarised with the document during orientation.

Review Process

- The language policy will be reviewed and updated regularly as part of the curriculum review cycle and as part of the whole school improvement plan.
- The leadership team will review the implementation of the policy in classrooms and through the school on a regular basis as part of the performance management process.
- The next full review will be in 2020.

Language Practices

Language Practices across the school

The School's curriculum is built around the fundamental concepts of holistic learning, intercultural awareness and communication, culminating in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme which is followed by all students in the Sixth Form. We encourage students to develop the knowledge, understanding, attitudes and skills necessary to participate actively and responsively in a changing world. Encouraging students to make links within and across subject groups is integral to the school ethos. As such, all Year 7 students are issued with vocabulary books and reading passports to encourage them to record their independent reading, regardless of subject. We aim for each student to reach the highest level of literacy and proficiency in English, the main language of instruction, two other modern foreign languages and Latin, and acknowledge that language skills and knowledge about language are transferable. Every Year 11 student takes two languages at GCSE in addition to English and English Literature.

At BGS, we recognise that:

- all teachers are also language teachers who have the responsibility of facilitating language acquisition and promoting communication skills through their subject areas.
- whilst language acquisition follows distinct stages, students' rate of acquisition varies greatly from individual to individual and therefore teachers differentiate and personalise their lessons to the needs of the individual and of groups, scaffolding and extending as required.

Language A and Mother Tongue Programmes

English

We see English as the medium through which we express and understand ourselves, and make sense of the world, we recognise its importance as the world language of commerce, learning, science, and industry and how vital it is for success in all other subjects.

KS3

Key Stage 3 English has the study of language and literature at its core. Each student will study writing skills, a modern text, Shakespeare, poetry, a playscript, a non-fiction unit and reading skills in their first year. We also focus on teaching the students to apply spelling, punctuation, grammar and speed reading skills to their writing in order to ensure basic standards in writing and reading are maintained and improved.

In Year 7, students are assessed after three weeks so that the department can ascertain their baseline grade, from which their target grades are calculated. In Years 7 and 8, students are assessed through ten formal pieces produced over the Key Stage, so that the students know exactly how they are progressing in their writing and reading. We also have a library lesson a fortnight for Year 7, where students are

encouraged to bring the books they are reading at home to school to promote a positive reading environment. They are also given guidance in choosing new texts from our ever-growing collection by our librarian. Years 7 receive 7 hours of tuition a fortnight and Year 8 are taught for 6 hours every fortnight.

KS4

At Key Stage 4, we continue to develop the skills and interests acquired in Key Stage 3. Students are introduced to modern and more traditional poetry, playwrights and novelists from England and other cultures and more focused essay-writing and speaking and listening skills. All pupils take AQA GCSE English Literature as well as English Language.

The speaking and listening component allows students to improve their skills in public speaking as well as encouraging constant improvement in discussion skills in the classroom over the two years. Students receive 7 hours of English tuition per fortnight.

KS5

The English Department offers a wide curricula within the IB. Every Sixth Form student takes either English Literature at Higher or Standard Level or Literature and Performance at Standard Level.

Other Mother Tongues

We recognize that even though the majority of the students at our school come from a family or linguistic background where our language of instruction, English, is their mother tongue, there are a significant number of students who need English language support to enable them to participate fully in the academic and social aspects of the school. As such, all teachers are language teachers and strive to support second language learners not only in the language classes but also other subject classes, such as mathematics, sciences, humanities, technology and the arts. Every teacher, regardless of subject or level, reviews the needs of the students and keeps a record of this by updating their context sheets.

Mother tongue development opportunities are offered for students on a regular basis through language / culture clubs. Previously BGS has run language clubs for Punjabi and Chinese speakers (these being our 2 main Ethnic Minority languages.) We have extended this to Yoruba and hope to develop it even further through the house system to students with an interest in other languages so that we can widen the focus. We would like to develop a language focus for the month through the house system.

The school will enter students for external examinations in their mother tongue where desired, so long as an oral exam invigilator can be found (where the language is not one taught in school) and no controlled assessment element is required.

Language B Programmes

“The limits of my language are the limits of my world.”
–Ludwig Wittgenstein

Modern Foreign Languages

At BGS, we support the view that language competence is fundamental to academic success and understand that the acquisition of more than one language plays a crucial role in enabling students to understand and communicate ideas and information confidently and creatively. We place an emphasis on integrating the cultures of the MFL into our curriculum and know that there is no doubt that the teaching of modern languages and cultures contributes to the development of the IB learner profile and encourages students to be lifelong inquirers. Culture is studied in language classes, through specially designed units of work that integrate language and culture into meaningful exchanges. The acquisition of cultural knowledge includes the studying of texts and literature, film and history. It is also studied and celebrated in International week and International Day, through ECM days and trips, exchanges and work experience abroad that are organized each year.

We also place a strong emphasis on speaking in the target language, aiming to reach optimum use both by the teacher and by the student in teacher-student, student-teacher and student-student conversations. We aim for it to be the norm for all verbal interaction that takes place in the MFL classroom to occur in the Target Language (TL). Teachers look to enthuse students and increase their creativity, problem-solving and independence.

Key Stage 3

In Year 7, students can study either French or German. Parents may request the language on their application form. Native speakers will be assessed on an individual basis, although on the whole they will be advised to take up a different language and to sit an external examination in their native language when desirable, typically in Year 10. Staff will endeavour to ascertain the second language studied by each child at KS2, and the depth of their knowledge in order to group pupils according to exposure to the language, during this time of transition in the KS2 National Curriculum. Students receive eight 50-minute lessons a fortnight in French or German in Year 7, with the aim of immersing them into the target language and culture to ensure secure proficiency.

In Year 8, students choose a second MFL to study. Currently, they may choose between German, French, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Japanese and Mandarin. Pupils will receive five lessons per fortnight in their first (MFL1) and five in their second (MFL2) language. Given the added difficulty of the languages, pupils wishing to study Russian, Japanese or Mandarin should have the recommendation from their MFL1 teacher. Pupils study their MFL1 and MFL2 curricula for 2 years in order to give them a solid foundation of the language, grammar, linguistics and the culture.

Key Stage 4

Students continue to study their MFL1 and their MFL2 through KS4 until their GCSE. The language learning opportunities outside the classroom offered at this Key Stage include trips and exchanges to a target-language country. Teachers build upon and develop students' confidence and fluency in the language as well as continuing to build upon their cultural knowledge.

Key Stage 5

Every student at KS5 pursues a foreign language in Group 2 (Language B) of the IB Diploma Programme. All students have access to a native speaker, through timetabled speaking sessions with our language assistants. Traditionally we have French, German and Spanish assistants who liaise with teachers to support and consolidate pupils in their speaking and listening. Currently, we have Italian, Russian and Japanese assistants in addition to this provision.

For the IBDP the languages currently offered are:

Language B: French (HL/SL), German (HL/SL), Spanish (HL/SL), Italian (HL/SL), Russian (HL/SL), Japanese (HL/SL) and Mandarin (HL/SL)

Beginners Language (Ab Initio): French, German, Spanish, Italian, Japanese and Mandarin

We pay particular attention to the selection of language options for the IBDP in Years 12 and 13. This process will be started half-way through Year 11, when students make their option choices are advised to consult the IB Diploma Coordinator, the Careers Advisor and specialist language teachers about the most suitable language choice to ensure that the level of challenge is appropriate. The school will review the range of languages on offer at KS5 on an annual basis.

Classics

We are proud to be able to offer Latin and Ancient History to all our students. The benefits of studying Classics are as wide-ranging as our curriculum, which focuses primarily on language, literature and history. We believe that the study of Classics improves students' analytical, critical, creative and linguistic skills, which are key to both academic and professional success.

Through the course, students gain a broader understanding of both ancient and modern societies and languages. They gain valuable insights into modern culture and enhance their understanding of English and Modern Foreign Languages and of the concept and patterns of language in general. By studying literature and history, students learn to challenge modern and ancient ideas and concepts as well as developing their own abilities.

KS3

Given the broad benefits, all students at BGS study Latin at KS3; students have one lesson a week and follow the Imperium Latin Course. In Year 7, students learn a mixture of vocabulary, grammar and Classical Civilisation, studying the Emperor Hadrian and his childhood in detail. They translate and follow stories about Hadrian and his family and see what their lives would have been like. In Year 8 the students learn more vocabulary and grammar and learn about the Emperors, especially those who predated Hadrian. In Year 9 (three lessons a fortnight) students continue with their language learning as well as learning more about the reign of the Emperor Hadrian. Students are then ready to select either Latin as an option, Latin as a second language or Ancient History as a GCSE subject. With broad cross-curricular links, especially to English, History and MFL, this course helps students to broaden and expand their English vocabulary and understanding of the world.

KS4

Those who choose to continue studying Latin in KS4, following the EQUQAS qualification, learn more complex grammatical constructions and vocabulary and practise unseen translation. In civilisation they learn about Roman entertainment; baths, the amphitheatre, dinner parties, recitations and theatre. Students analyse primary sources and learn to write extended pieces of writing. Students also have the option to study Ancient History at GCSE (no language required). In this subject they will learn about the ancient Romans and Persians as well as historical figures such as Cleopatra and Alexander the Great.

KS5

Students may choose to study Latin through the IBDP at Standard or Higher Level. We aim to enable students to study works in the original language, to respond to texts as literature and to develop awareness of classical literature and civilisation. At both levels candidates are enabled to study in depth, and independently, an aspect of language, literature or civilisation which they find of particular interest as a piece of coursework. This provides invaluable research skills. Students will be encouraged to read a wider range of literature in translation as a complement to

the study of original texts, and to understand the Roman or Greek civilisation along with its differences from, and similarities to, their own culture. Students will continue to develop their language skills, including comprehension and translation from verse and prose. Students can also study Ancient History and Classical Civilisation, reading ancient texts in translation such as, The Iliad and The Aeneid, while learning about the Emperor Augustus, Greek Art or Roman Architecture.

Language Assessment

All students complete a language profile on admittance to the school providing useful information about language background to assist with the identification of need and the provision of support. An audit is also sent to us from the borough which tells us the number of Ethnic Minority students and their proficiency in English.

In Year 7 all students complete a standardised English language assessment covering reading, writing and spelling. The results are passed on to relevant teachers and provide information about the level of support required from the SEN department. If any issues occur with literacy the SEN department would cross reference this information with the data provided by the borough. Students who receive targeted EAL support are continually assessed through student work samples, contributions to class work and observations in other subjects. Those students who are reading at a level below their chronological age are targeted for intervention immediately. Year 12 mentors deliver targeted literacy lessons to small groups of two or three students. With parental support, the students are encouraged to read regularly and are equipped with the skills to decode and interpret texts with greater proficiency.

All information gathered by the school and the borough is collated on SIMS data mark sheets. All teachers use this information in order to personalise the provision of their pedagogy, including the creation of context sheets. These students are then monitored and assessed regularly as individuals' progress at different speeds and through continuous teacher assessment it is possible to evaluate when student's needs have changed. Teachers offer scaffolded or extension tasks as appropriate to those students who have a reading age above their chronological age. Students in both mainstream classes and intervention groups are provided with task specific expectations prior to assessment tasks and reflect on their progress and regular teacher feedback. Where handwriting issues arise, support is offered by the SEN department.

All teachers assess using the four skills of listening, reading, speaking, writing, using both formative and summative assessments to provide information of language growth as well as subject knowledge. Intra-departmental moderation takes places regularly to ensure fair application. Teachers in all curriculum areas record a regular Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar mark out of 3 for every Key Stage 4 student. All teachers are expected to take some responsibility for teaching

language and teachers of all subjects have consistently high expectations of language use.

In class, teachers make use of different types of assessment, including peer-, self- and teacher-assessment with the aim of activating pupils as resources for each other and increasing their independence and responsibility as learners. Progress is also measured formally through end of year exams, standardised tests and external examinations, including MIDYIS, GCSE, and IB examinations.

Support Services

Library and Media Resources

Access to authentic texts is fundamental to our language programmes across the school: our libraries and ICT resources therefore play an important part of our pedagogy. These resources are reviewed and developed regularly; facilities include the main library, the MFL resource centre, media suites, language laboratories and ICT suites. The main library is open during and after school. Students are timetabled to spend one lesson per fortnight in the library in Year 7 in order to familiarise themselves with its services and encourage reading. The librarian also assists departments where required with resourcing reading lists. Homework club takes place in a media suite. The MFL resource centre houses our MFL texts and media. Pupils are encouraged to access it regularly; in KS5 pupils are encouraged to spend any free period in there and all are asked to complete book / film reviews on a termly basis. Most classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards and digital resources are shared through Google Classroom and can be borrowed by students from several departments to support learning.

Professional Development

At BGS, we strive to keep abreast of the most current research and best practice regarding language acquisition and cognitive growth. This is done through professional development workshops, guest speakers, professional reading, sharing best practices and regular engagement with colleagues from other schools and institutions.

Learning Support

EAL Support Classes

English language learners who are unable to fully access the academic curriculum delivered in English receive specialised instruction in English language acquisition from qualified staff on a regular basis. All of our EAL students are at the competent or independent step, with a small minority in the consolidating step. Where necessary, students are targeted for individualised or small group EAL support, breaking down the language components of the curriculum and teaching new vocabulary.

In-Class or Co-Teaching Support

EAL students as well as those students who struggle to access the curriculum may also receive support in their year and subject area classes from qualified staff. SEN and EAL staff run small group sessions outside of class to target specific skills in line with what is being taught in class, and provide in-class support whenever possible.

BGS Languages and the Community

Parental Involvement

At BGS, we recognise and value the impact of parents and families on the language development of our students. We believe that preserving, respecting and developing a learner's mother tongue is crucial for overall cognitive development and for maintaining a sense of cultural identity. The IB also states that development of mother-tongue language is a: "strong predictor of long-term academic achievement, including acquisition of other languages."

We encourage parents to take an interest in what their child is learning in school so they can, in their home language, engage them in thoughtful discussions, answer and pose questions and help deepen their thinking. Parents' evenings, reports and contact through the planner are the primary methods of communication with parents. Where possible, students/parents act as interpreters at parents' evenings and we hope to involve parents further by asking if they would like to be involved in writing and translating notices and key information for the newsletter.

We also fully support the work of the Parents' Association in organising events for the community, including the Summer Fayre, a Bollywood Night, Quiz Nights Pamper Evenings and so on. Their fund-raising is directed into providing learning resources and opportunities for our students in areas chosen by the parents.

Out of school, we believe parents have a special responsibility for nurturing a love of and respect for language in our students. In addition to their role as mother tongue teachers, we also believe that our families can play an important role in modelling for our students' ways of engaging with people in our community who speak other languages and are from different cultural backgrounds. By trying to live up to the attributes of the IB's learner profile we believe we can all contribute to a feeling of shared humanity.

Language Provision for the BGS Community

BGS is committed to supporting its community's language provision through a wide array of initiatives. As such, the school employs a dedicated Lead Teacher of Specialism and Outreach who coordinates, develops and expands these projects.

To support the primary schools in our borough and beyond:

- sixth-form students who follow the language leaders course and are thus trained in teaching languages, deliver hour-long lessons over a period of 6 weeks
- workshops for Year 6 gifted and talented pupils are offered in a variety of subject areas, including MFL, English, Computing and Classics.
- MFL teachers, language leaders and KS5 pupils put on Europa Town for Year 6 pupils to come and use their language skills in a realistic setting.
- our Year 8 pupils perform plays they have written themselves in MFL and rehearsed in their drama lessons, in a cross-curricular initiative, to primary school students

- we offer an annual taster session of Japanese calligraphy

We ensure that we rotate the primary schools that we work with in order to support them fairly.

To support other secondary schools in our borough and beyond:

- we organise and host termly meetings for MFL teachers to share good practice and discuss the latest changes to research and the curricula. We also arrange mutual MFL observations, events and competitions, such as KS5 debating, KS4 public speaking creative writing at all Key Stages and a KS3/4 media competition.
- we organise an annual *Our Business is Languages* event at Greenwich University for approximately eight secondary schools in order to discover in a very practical way the opportunities for strong linguists in the world of work.
- we host and are involved in London's *Network for Languages* meetings
- we are looking to expand our network with other IB schools to share good practice

To support adults in our community:

- we run adult education evening MFL classes, traditionally in Spanish

References

Krashen, S. 2005. Bilingual education and second language acquisition theory. In C. F. Leyba (Ed.), *Schooling and language minority students: A theoretico-practical framework* (33-61). Sacramento, CA: LBD Publishers.