

INTENT: A powerful, knowledge-rich curriculum

By the end of their education, a student of French at Dixons Fazakerley Academy:

- Will be able to communicate fluently, to an exceptional standard, for a variety of different purposes. Students will be able to communicate in written and spoken form, with confidence, about themselves and the world around them.
- Will know of the culture and history of France and French speaking countries.
- Will understand why the study of an additional language is a valuable pursuit. Students will understand that a deep understanding of another language and its culture enriches their own and provides them with an edge in an ever-demanding job market.

Our uniting 'sentence' is:

“The MFL department inspired students at Dixons Fazakerley to be confident and fluent linguists who are passionate about the target language culture.”

In order to deliver a powerful, knowledge-rich curriculum we have selected knowledge by:

- Considering, debating and making decisions regarding the three pillars of progression and powerful knowledge in French, through the Dixons Academies Trust Cross-Cutting meetings, educational reading, professional associations and discussions with colleagues.
- Identifying key components in language and a core of linguistic knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and phonics which increase in complexity over time in order to form a firm foundation of language learning.
- Specifying in detail, the knowledge students will remember underpinned by the National Curriculum and wider domain.
- Mapping knowledge backwards from the knowledge and skills needed by an expert linguist.

The three pillars of progression in our subject are:

- **Phonics:** Clear and reliable pronunciation and the links between sounds and spelling enable students to accurately produce language through speech and in written form. Students require a strong awareness of phonology in order to decode words when reading and listening.
- **Vocabulary:** Breadth and depth of vocabulary is crucial for students to become proficient in French. Students must have a secure knowledge of high frequency words and topic-based vocabulary and be able to use vocabulary across different contexts and modalities.
- **Grammar:** Students need a clear understanding of grammatical features such as a range of tenses, agreements on verbs for person and number, agreement on nouns and adjectives in order to accurately produce language through speech and in written form.

In order to achieve a true understanding of French, topics have been intelligently sequenced based on the following rationale:

- Our curriculum is based upon progression in phonics, vocabulary and grammar, which is planned vertically, and horizontally in order to build secure schema. Through learning and retrieval practice, the range, complexity and accuracy of grammatical features and the breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge increases over time.
- Content is delivered through a spiral curriculum design. Students revisit themes and topics with increasing complexity so that as they encounter new learning, their existing schemas are revised and restructured to accommodate new learning. We interleave vocabulary and grammar and implement spaced learning and retrieval practice to ensure knowledge is transferred to long-term memory.
- The French curriculum is built upon the linguistic concept of lexicogrammar. Lexicogrammar is a term used in systemic functional linguistics and emphasises the importance of recognising the interdependence of – and continuity between – vocabulary (lexis) and syntax (grammar). We avoid thinking of grammar and vocabulary as discrete, separate, phenomena. In practice, this means that students in Year 7 and Year 8 will never have lessons teaching verb conjugation in isolation. Instead, students are introduced to verbs - across all tenses - as items of vocabulary. However, an explicit understanding of how to manipulate grammatical structures is a crucial skill, therefore from Year 9 onwards; students are taught grammatical concepts explicitly.

- The teaching of phonics is explicit in lessons in Year 7 and 8 through 'sound of the week'. Phonology is also developed through repetition of sentences, reading aloud and dictation, which are essential for developing secure sound-spelling relationships. (Erler 2004; Baddeley 1974) The aim is for students to have confidence in understanding and producing the key SSC by the end of Year 8 so that knowledge is proceduralised and automatised.
- The four modalities of language – listening, speaking, reading and writing – are mapped throughout our curriculum so that students are able to apply knowledge in different contexts and for different purposes. As students progress through the curriculum, they are able to understand longer written texts and spoken discourse, produce a well-structured text and engage in discussion.

The French curriculum will address social disadvantage and actively seeks to tell the stories of the marginalised by:

- Oracy can be a key determining factor in a student's future social and professional success. The French curriculum strongly promotes the development of expressing one's views on a variety of social and cultural topics in a public setting. To develop these skills the curriculum aims to normalise speaking confidently in front of others by practicing vocabulary through listening as modelling and repetition of sentences. Students will also independently answer questions in full sentences in front of their peers.
- Reading is the gateway to learning and is key to future academic achievement and well-being. Therefore, the French curriculum develops students' self-efficacy as readers through regular opportunities for students to hear high quality, expressive reading and to practise high-quality reading of a range of texts. The 'Rigorous Reading' approach implemented across the Academy ensures that students are supported to enable them to decode and comprehend the powerful knowledge.
- Our curriculum equips our students with the cultural capital to be successful by exposing them to knowledge and worlds beyond their lived experiences. Students learn about a range of cultural events, festivals and traditions from a variety of French Speaking countries, representing a diverse range of experiences, which are explicitly planned in the curriculum. This helps to break down stereotypes and promote greater empathy and understanding between different social groups.
- Students develop their ability to speak formally about a range of important social issues such as equal marriage and poverty. They develop their understanding of how people from different communities and countries have different value sets through a broad range of texts from various Francophone countries.

We fully believe French can contribute to the personal development of students at Dixons Fazakerley Academy by:

- Learning a new language opens doors to opportunities, both personal and professional. Being able to communicate with French speakers opens up opportunities to connect with more people, learn about different cultures, and have a deeper understanding of the world. This can lead to greater empathy and understanding of diverse perspectives and cultural differences. Additionally, learning a new language can improve cognitive function and memory. It can also improve overall communication skills, leading to more effective communicators in their own language and in cross-cultural contexts.
- Our curriculum also provides students with a multitude of opportunities to understand right and wrong and different ethical and moral viewpoints. For example, students will learn about the importance of voluntary work and helping in the community, poverty around the world, the importance of charities and various issues surrounding social inequality.
- Students will experience to reflect and develop personal - but informed - viewpoints on important issues. For example Year 9 students will learn how to express their opinions on the many festivals that take place in France (Bastille day for instance). In KS4, students will discuss various issues including different views on marriage and the family unit, the impact of social media on mental health.
- Many of the contexts in which students practice their use of the target language facilitate opportunities for personal development. Students will study topics such as staying fit, eating healthily, the dangers of alcohol and drugs and healthy habits concerning mental and emotional health.

At KS3 and KS4, our belief is that homework should be interleaved-revision of powerful knowledge that has been modelled and taught in lessons. This knowledge is recalled and applied through a range of low-stakes quizzing and practice.

Opportunities are built in to make links to the world of work to enhance the careers, advice and guidance that students are exposed to:

- The curriculum provides students with opportunities to consider the world of work in a target language context. The topic of future aspirations, study and work is studied explicitly in Year 11 Cycle 3.

- A Careers Spotlight is shared and discussed with students twice per cycle. This allows students to learn about a variety of subject specific careers that might be of interest to them.
- Students deepen their understanding of translation and interpretation as viable career pathways in their lessons from Year 7.
- External speakers such as Sanako and Mingalaba deliver assemblies to all year groups to discuss the value of studying a language and give students an insight to the range of career options available to them where language skills would be hugely valuable.

We teach beyond the requirements of the National Curriculum by:

- Teaching more complex grammar and language. The lexicogrammar approach allows implicit teaching of more complex grammar such as the subjunctive mood and French idioms and expressions are introduced from Year 7 onwards.
- A key component of our curriculum is to ensure that students have a deep understanding of the cultural celebrations and traditions of France and Francophone countries in order to provide students with a more comprehensive picture of the cultural practices and beliefs of French-speaking people. The study of some celebrations such as La fête nationale and la fête des rois are taught in the target language.