Curriculum aims

Learning and undertaking activities in languages contribute to achievement of the curriculum aims for all young people to become:

- successful learners who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve
- confident individuals who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives
- responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society.

The importance of languages

Languages are part of the cultural richness of our society and the world in which we live and work. Learning languages contributes to mutual understanding, a sense of global citizenship and personal fulfilment. Pupils learn to appreciate different countries, cultures, communities and people. By making comparisons, they gain insight into their own culture and society. The ability to understand and communicate in another language is a lifelong skill for education, employment and leisure in this country and throughout the world.

Learning languages gives pupils opportunities to develop their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills and to express themselves with increasing confidence, independence and creativity. They explore the similarities and differences between other languages and English and learn how language can be manipulated and applied in different ways. The development of communication skills, together with understanding of the structure of language, lay the foundations for future study of other languages and support the development of literacy skills in a pupil's own language.

Key concepts

There are a number of key concepts that underpin the study of languages. Pupils need to understand these concepts in order to deepen and broaden their knowledge, skills and understanding.

Linguistic competence

- Developing the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- Applying linguistic knowledge and skills to understand and communicate effectively.

Knowledge about language

- Understanding how a language works and how to manipulate it.
- Recognising that languages differ but may share common grammatical, syntactical or lexical features.

Creativity

- Using familiar language for new purposes and in new contexts.
- Using imagination to express thoughts, ideas, experiences and feelings.

Intercultural understanding

- Appreciating the richness and diversity of other cultures.
- Recognising that there are different ways of seeing the world, and developing an international outlook.

The study of languages
This may include French, German, Spanish, Italian, Mandarin, Urdu and other major spoken world languages depending on local needs and circumstances.

Linguistic competence
Pupils who are competent in using language are able to adapt their knowledge and skills, be proactive and cope with unexpected responses and unpredictable situations in a wide range of situations and contexts.

Knowledge about language
Pupils should explore and learn about standard structures and patterns.

Manipulate
Pupils should understand how to adapt and re-use language in modified forms for different purposes and contexts. This is essential for being creative with language.

Creativity
The ability to express ideas and feelings using a limited range of language is an important skill for pupils to develop and practise, as it prevents them from being restricted in what they can say and write, which can be frustrating.

For new purposes and in new contexts
This provides pupils with the opportunity to use language imaginatively and creatively and to take risks.

Intercultural understanding
Learning a new language provides unique opportunities for pupils to explore national identities and to become aware of both similarities and contrasts between the cultures of different countries, including their own.
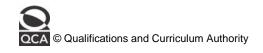
Diversity
Many languages are spoken in more than one country and there are significant cultural differences between these countries.

Other cultures
Aspects of different cultures could include everyday life, social customs, school life, festivals and events of national importance.

Different ways of seeing the world
This includes religious beliefs, social customs, traditions, values, attitudes towards other countries and reactions to world events.

Key processes

These are the essential skills and processes in languages that pupils need to learn to make progress.

Developing language-learning strategies

Pupils should be able to:
- identify patterns in the target language
- develop techniques for memorising words, phrases and spellings
- use their knowledge of English or another language when learning the target language
- use previous knowledge, context and other clues to work out the meaning of what they hear or read
- use reference materials such as dictionaries appropriately and effectively.

Developing language skills

Pupils should be able to:
- listen for gist or detail
- skim and scan written texts for the main points or details
- respond appropriately to spoken and written language
- use correct pronunciation and intonation
- ask and answer questions
- initiate and sustain conversations
- write clearly and coherently, including an appropriate level of detail
- redraft their writing to improve accuracy and quality
- re-use language that they have heard or read in their own speaking and writing
- adapt language they already know in new contexts for different purposes
- deal with unfamiliar language, unexpected responses and unpredictable situations.

Patterns in the target language
This includes patterns in pronunciation, spelling, word order and sentence structure.

Techniques for memorising
These include identifying similarities between new and known words, associating words and phrases with a physical response, actions, images, the written form or sounds (including rhymes, repetition), practising with a friend or family member and using the technique 'look, cover, write/say, check'.

Knowledge of English or another language
This includes comparing new words, phrases, expressions and grammatical structures with English and/or another language that the pupil knows well. This can help pupils to remember new language and to understand how the target language works.

Other clues
These include tone of voice, intonation, non-verbal communication (such as facial expression or body language), key words, similarities between the target language and English or another language, and grammatical function.

Skim and scan
'Skim' refers to reading for general understanding; 'scan' refers to looking for specific information in a text.

Re-use language
This includes using language that pupils have encountered as a building block for their own spoken or written use of the target language. This kind of 'borrowing' of language makes it easier to express ideas or information.

Deal with unfamiliar language, unexpected responses and unpredictable situations
This includes developing different strategies for coping with these situations, such as asking for repetition or clarification, listening or looking for key words, and using previous knowledge, context and other clues to try to make sense of what they hear or read.

Range and content

This section outlines the breadth of the subject on which teachers should draw when teaching the key concepts and key processes.

The study of languages should include:
- the spoken and written form of the target language
- the interrelationship between sounds and writing in the target language
- the grammar of the target language and how to apply it
- a range of vocabulary and structures
- learning about different countries and cultures
- comparing pupils' own experiences and perspectives with those of people in countries and communities where the target language is spoken.

Interrelationship between sounds and writing
This includes underpinning principles such as common letter strings.

Curriculum opportunities

During the key stage pupils should be offered the following opportunities that are integral to their learning and enhance their engagement with the concepts, processes and content of the subject.

The curriculum should provide opportunities for pupils to:
- hear, speak, read and write in the target language regularly and frequently within the classroom and beyond
- communicate in the target language individually, in pairs, in groups and with speakers of the target language, including native speakers where possible, for a variety of purposes
- use an increasing range of more complex language
- make links with English at word, sentence and text level
- use a range of resources, including ICT, for accessing and communicating information
- listen to, read or view a range of materials, including authentic materials in the target language, both to support learning and for personal interest and enjoyment
- develop their language skills in a variety of contexts
- use the target language in connection with topics and issues that are engaging and may be related to other areas of the curriculum.

Beyond
This could include the use of appropriate websites, special days and events, school visits abroad, exchanges and links with schools abroad.

Including native speakers
This could be face-to-face, in school (for example with a foreign language assistant) or on visits abroad, by email, or through videoconferencing. Communication with young people in a country where the target language is spoken is particularly relevant and can be very motivating.

Variety of purposes
These include real purposes such as sending and receiving emails, simulated or actual real-life situations, or creative and imaginative work.

Links with English
Learning another language helps pupils develop literacy skills, including understanding the origin of words, formation of structures, grammar and syntax, different text types and drama.

Range of resources
These include live or recorded audio and video resources, texts (including on-screen and multi-modal texts) and the internet.

Authentic materials
These could include textual materials of different kinds, video, television, images or video and audio recordings from the internet.