

FRENCH – STATEMENT OF INTENT



We are ambitious for our pupils and offer them the opportunity to stretch their wings academically and culturally by teaching them French. Learning French is about more than memorising vocabulary and understanding grammatical terms. It is an insight into the lives of people who live at a distance and who do things differently. It is a tantalising glimpse into the mysterious nature of a world beyond our physical horizons.

“Do you know what a foreign accent is? It’s a sign of bravery.” Amy Chua

All KS2 pupils learn French. From Y3 they follow a structured programme of lessons designed to enable them to speak confidently in French in social situations and to understand how languages work. We encourage children to bring their knowledge of other languages to the classroom and explore the sounds of say, Polish or Spanish. We want to stimulate children’s curiosity about language and to inspire a lifelong interest in learning the language of others.

“Learn a language and you’ll avoid a war.” Arab proverb

We recognise that speaking a foreign language, whether Japanese, Russian or Swedish, is deeply enriching and gratifying. Children of primary age are hard-wired to absorb language almost effortlessly and we intend to provide interactive and enjoyable lessons each week which build on previous learning so that when the children leave St Michael’s they are already well-versed in the basics of the language and have had many opportunities to speak, listen to, read and write in French. We use a variety of media such as songs, culturally enriching videos, stories, poems, role play and games to assist the learning of French.

“A man who knows two languages is worth two men.” French proverb

We plan using the National Curriculum as a starting point. In addition, we use the very effective Primary French Project to help us decide what to teach and when. The Primary French Project is a resource developed by Catherine Cheater to, who is widely recognised as a leading light in the area of French in Primary Schools. Recently, we have looked at the Language Gym and have been impressed with the way they use Sentence Builders and a wide variety of activities which provide scaffolding to gradually help learners build up skills from recognition (listening and reading) to production (speaking and writing). Therefore, our approach is structured around the content and timeline provided by the Primary French Project and it is enhanced by using the Sentence Builders Approach. We also use songs and short videos which provide an insight into the otherness of the French culture.

“Knowledge of languages is the doorway to wisdom.” Roger Bacon

BIG IDEAS

COMMUNICATOR - I am a **communicator** because I listen, speak, read and write to communicate with other people. I also know that I can understand how another person is feeling by looking at them.

WORLD CITIZEN - I am a **world citizen** because I understand that other people speak different languages and I am curious to learn more about them. I respect diversity and know that everybody is unique.

LINGUIST - I am a **linguist** because I explore new words, sounds and spelling systems. This extends my language and helps me to understand how languages work. I also recognise that there are patterns in language and this helps me with my own language as well as foreign languages.



How we deliver French

At St Michael's we are aware of the enthusiasm and curiosity that children have for learning other languages and are keen to tap into their potential to learn effectively and for life. We have high expectations of all our children and encourage them to be enthusiastic and active learners.

French is taught weekly to all children from Year 3 through to Year 6; children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 have French lessons once a fortnight. Lessons provide children with a range of vocabulary and skills so that they may communicate effectively in a number of situations using French. French is not taught by the class teacher but by a specialist French teacher.

The length of lessons is age-appropriate: children in year 6 have lessons that can be between 45 and 60 minutes, whereas children in year 3 have around 30 minutes for their lessons and the youngest learners have around 15 minutes of French per week.

In Reception and Key Stage 1, children have short sessions where they practise a variety of songs and finger rhymes, gradually building up confidence and competence. We use toy animals to encourage the children to speak in French and one of the underlying principles is that language is continually reused and built upon. For example, children in their first term at St Michael's will learn a finger rhyme which practises saying *Bonjour. Bonjour Papa. Bonjour Maman. Bonjour petit bébé.* When they are in year 2 they will use some of these words in a conversation where they ask how much fruit is in a grocer's shop. French units are planned and arranged to maximise children's learning. Most topics are revisited at some point and learning in each area is extended.

In EYFS and KS1 lessons are planned using Little Languages. This is a published resource from La Jolie Ronde and provides insight into life outside the UK. It includes songs, finger rhymes, and nursery rhymes. In addition to the materials from Little Languages, we add Youtube videos and a range of games to practise speaking, singing and recognising French words and phrases.

In Key Stage 2, we follow the curriculum suggested by the French Institute in London. This course (The Primary French Project) is a unique course which has been picked because it has built-in progression and frequently reviews previously learned language. In Year 3, children begin by learning how to answer a few questions about themselves and naming the home nations of the UK before finding out about some of the main monuments in Paris. By the time they leave us in Year 6, they will have a good knowledge of simple sentence structure and some key grammatical concepts. Topics covered include animals, houses, gardens, telling the time, and places in a town.

Where possible, access to authentic French speakers is provided, and the growth of videos online has allowed our children the means to watch an ever-increasing pool of appropriate clips. For example, children in year 5 might watch French children asking for directions to a café in Marseille. This part of the curriculum is evolving fast and there are many more videos which will be added to lessons as time goes on.

A large part of lessons is given over to children practising the language themselves and there is plenty of opportunity for collective and individual repetition in most lessons and whenever new words are being taught. Vocabulary is practised rigorously and there are a



number of ways of doing this. Well-known games like Noughts and Crosses, Connect 4, Battleships, Pelmanism and Blockbusters can all be adapted for use on the whiteboard to practise new and old words and phrases; these games can also be adapted so that children can play with a partner or in a group. In addition, there are other games which are used in lessons to enable pupils to practise longer phrases and sentences and these tend to be used more frequently as the children get older.

Singing is known to help learners to memorise the language. We are all familiar with some song words and in some cases, they can stay with us for a lifetime. Therefore, singing songs in French is an important part of lessons and can be particularly helpful when learning phrases and sentences. We have access to a number of high-quality songs which children find enjoyable and these are used in many lessons. All children watch and join in with number songs and this helps to embed numbers up to 20 in French.

In some lessons, children will have the chance to see some aspects of French culture and it is hoped that these insights will give them a chance to think about cultural differences and their own place in the world.