

MFL (Modern Foreign Languages) at Casterton

Purpose of Study

Learning a foreign language is a liberation from insularity and provides an opening to other cultures. A high-quality language education should foster pupils' curiosity and deepen their understanding of the world. The teaching should enable pupils to express their ideas and thoughts in another language and to understand and respond to its speakers, both in speech and in writing. It should also provide opportunities for them to communicate for practical purposes, learn new ways of thinking and read great literature in the original language. Language teaching should provide the foundation for learning further languages, equipping pupils to study and work in other countries. In our department, all our teachers are very talented linguists and experts of the subject they teach, ensuring a complete and deep subject knowledge.

Aims

The National Curriculum for Languages aims to ensure that all pupils:

1. Understand and respond to spoken and written language from a variety of authentic sources
2. Speak with increasing confidence, fluency, and spontaneity, finding ways of communicating what they want to say, including through discussion and asking questions, and continually improving the accuracy of their pronunciation and intonation
3. Can write at varying length, for different purposes and audiences, using the variety of grammatical structures that they have learnt
4. Discover and develop an appreciation of a range of writing in the language studied, thereby cultivating cultural capital, and gaining a deeper understanding of the language's cultural context and historical significance.

Hours of Study (1 lesson = 1 hour)

Year (total in year)	Hours per two-week cycle	Hours per year (40 weeks)	Number of students in MFL
7 (180)	4	80	180
8 (210)	4	80	210
9 (210)	5	80	210

10 (210)	5	100	160
11 (210)	5	80	133

Timetabling and Setting Notes

MFL is grouped by mixed ability.

KS3 and KS4 students have four lessons of either French or Spanish every fortnight throughout the year. Cohorts are assigned a language in Year 7 on a rotation basis.

Grouping is as follows:

Year 7: 6 forms entry (180) study French or Spanish as a cohort, at the onset.

Year 8: 7 forms entry (210) as above

Year 9: 7 forms entry (210) as above. GCSE options are decided in Year 9.

Year 10: 6 groups (160) of either French or Spanish

Year 11: 6 groups (133) of either French or Spanish

Year 9 Options Notes

MFL is offered as one of three options including History and Geography to achieve a full EBACC.

Programmes of Study

Terms	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9
1	Introducing ourselves and talking about our pets, family, and friends.	Describing our family, using adjectives, opinions, and justifications.	Talking about modern technologies and what we use them for. Introducing music, films, reading and TV available for streaming.

2	Using longer sentences and more complex grammatical structures to describe the world around us.	Using physical descriptions to describe our friends and other people.	Introducing the past tense.
3	Talking about sports and free time. Describing our activities in relation to the weather and seasons.	Describing our environment: home and town. Learning about important cultural events in France and Spain.	Talking about a past holiday, enhancing narrative skills.
4	Using more complex adjectives to describe what we do in our free time, adding justifications.	Telling the time and reading transports timetables. Introducing food items.	Using the near future tense to organise a party.
5	Talking about school and teachers	Stem changing verbs and the future tense. Ordering at a restaurant, using conversational skills. Talking about what we are going to do this weekend.	Arranging to go out and making excuses. Using conditional, stem changing verbs, reflexive verbs.
6	Using adjectives to describe a typical day at school and our opinions on life at school.	Talking about holidays, using previous knowledge of present and future tenses. Describing a holiday town and what activities can be done there.	Revisions of grammatical points with strong emphasis on using three tenses. END OF YEAR 9 GCSE style exam.

Terms	Year 10- GCSE Board: AQA	Year 11- GCSE Board: AQA
1	Theme 1: Identity and culture: family and relationships	Theme 2: Local area, my home life and environment at local level.
2	Theme 1: Technology and free time	Theme 2: Social issues
3	Theme 1: Festivals and celebrations	Theme 2: Global and environmental issues
4	Theme 3: School and life at school	Skills work/exam-style practice
5	Theme 3: post-16 and careers	Revision/exams
6	Skills work, exam-style practice, revision/assessment. PPES	

Powerful Core Knowledge

How we identify powerful core subject knowledge

Core knowledge in Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) can be compared to a snowball, with a hard core that holds learning together. Vocabulary and grammar form the foundation of this core, and we place great emphasis on their learning from Year 7 onwards, as they are essential for achieving good outcomes at GCSE.

To ensure mastery at the core level, we consider what students have learnt in Key Stage 2, building upon that foundation to steadily progress towards higher levels of writing, listening, reading, and speaking skills.

In addition to vocabulary and grammar, cultural and semantic information is gradually added once students are secure with the core knowledge. This enables them to develop a deeper understanding of the language and culture and improve their overall language mastery.

We reinforce speaking skills by encouraging students to repeat phonics and pronunciation of words in the target language, helping them to develop their oral communication skills. By incorporating what students have learnt in Key Stage 2, we aim to ensure a smooth transition and build upon prior knowledge to achieve success in MFL.

How we sequence topics to create a logical, coherent, narrative.

In MFL lessons, learning is a sequential process, and there is a clear progression in the curriculum from Year 7 to GCSE. As students move through each year, they are exposed to increasingly complex language concepts, expanding their vocabulary and building on their grammatical knowledge.

In Year 7, the focus is on acquiring the fundamental language skills, including high frequency vocabulary, phonics and key grammatical structures. Students are introduced to key grammatical terms, which they will need to understand and use as they progress through the curriculum.

As students move through Years 8 and 9, the focus shifts towards the development of more advanced language skills. Teachers use a scaffolded approach to present new concepts in a structured way, building on students' prior knowledge. For example, selected verbs are taught in the present tense until students are secure, after which the future and past tenses are introduced to increase the level of complexity gradually.

By the time students reach GCSE level, they have acquired a broad vocabulary, strong grammatical knowledge, and excellent communication skills in the target language. They can read, write, listen, and speak with confidence, using a range of language structures and expressions to convey their ideas effectively.

Overall, the MFL curriculum is designed to ensure a smooth progression from Year 7 to GCSE, with a focus on developing key language skills and building on prior knowledge in a structured and scaffolded way. This approach helps students to achieve a high level of language mastery and prepares them for success in their GCSE examinations.

Retention

How we secure Mastery (long term retention) of powerful core knowledge

We follow the school approach of learn, practice, test (LPT)

We ensure that teachers are using the LPT system by providing training, resources, and regular feedback, encouraging collaboration, monitoring implementation, and celebrating success. This will support student learning and progress towards achieving their language goals. Each topic is accompanied by a workbook with the powerful core knowledge and vocabulary included.

Each new topic is introduced slowly, using I do, we do, you do to practise thoroughly. This newly acquired knowledge is then tested in class, to ensure short term memory accuracy. We introduce the verbalisation of new vocab through modelling and repeating aloud to ensure correct pronunciation as well as explicitly through the use of phonics.

At the start of every subsequent lesson, students take vocabulary quizzes to retrieve past vocabulary and grammatical structures pertaining to the topic being studied as well as revisiting previously learnt concepts.

As the topic is taught, we build in low stakes testing in the form of vocab tests, Quizlet quizzes and targeted questioning by the teacher.

At the end of the topic students take a core knowledge test and if they do not get 80%, they take it again until they do.

Core knowledge tests are organised, and prior knowledge is revisited, so that by the end of year 9, the whole of KS3 is being tested.

Vocabulary and Spelling

How we secure mastery in specialist academic vocabulary (T3 words)

In MFL, every word is an unfamiliar word and therefore is within the “specialist” realm. However, about 80% of the vocabulary in MFL share the same roots as English.

We teach these words as “cognates” and explain their Latin origin and migration to the English language.

This allows students to enrich their English language in the same stroke.

A good example is that of “Cognate,” a word that looks the same in English and another language. “Cognata” in Latin means “cousin” and has been mutated into cognate in French and English/ cognate in Spanish. In MFL we use cognates to demonstrate the common foundations of our languages and encourage students to link and connect the languages they use in their everyday lives.

Cognate is a T3 word (because of its derivatives, such as cognition, congeniality, and others) and participates in the broadening of our students’ vocabulary toolkit in other subjects.

The specialist academic vocabulary for each topic (tier 3 words) is given in knowledge organisers.

Teachers emphasise the importance of specialist vocabulary to communicate in everyday life.

How we secure mastery in vocabulary comprehension (T3 words in context)

Vocabulary, once introduced and learnt, is used in lesson to embed knowledge through reading extended texts, listening, writing, and speaking tasks.

Students are encouraged to refer to their vocabulary grids and books to improve their recall of spelling and pronunciation of the words.

Low stakes testing is regularly undertaken in class, through online team games and contextual questioning.

How we secure mastery in spelling (T3 words)

Spelling is embedded through repetition of writing.

This can take various shapes:

At the opening of each topic, students are introduced to the key vocabulary via the use of sentence builders, phonics and reading aloud introductions. Students are required to practise the vocabulary introduced in class via memrise which is a vocab learning programme that both teaches, tests, and retrieves past knowledge of vocabulary. Regular testing happens in the classroom and improvement is checked through reading comprehension and writing tasks where students are expected to show understanding of word order and spelling, allowing us to import new and rehearsed grammatical structures.

Academic Writing

How we define writing like a French or a Spanish native.

Our GCSE's goal is for students to produce texts of around 150 words, at higher tier in their GCSE.

Academic writing in MFL happens when these words come together to produce a fluent piece of writing in a variety of tenses with little room for misunderstanding.

In years 7 and 8, students start producing short (40 words) paragraphs on the topic just studied.

From year 9, the demand increases to about 80-90 words, on the topic currently being studied, using new and older vocabulary as well as previously studied grammatical points.

In years 10 and 11, students are expected to use previous and new learning to author between 90 and 150 words, using KS3 and KS4 concepts that they "recycle" and adapt to answer the questions posed to them.

How we teach academic writing in MFL

Translation from the target language into English and its reverse process is how we start teaching academic writing.

By translating texts, students remember words and structures more easily as they are modelled for them in the sample they are working with.

When reverse translation has taken place, students use the materials they have worked with to construct their own answers to the same question.

This practice allows them to create a bank of ready-made sentences they can then use to put together the first draft of their writing. Marking and feedback takes place.

Once the process is understood and assimilated, students are given a different question on the same topic and are asked to produce their own answer. In time, automatisms are in place, which allow students to tackle any question on any subject. When this happens confidently, students have reached mastery level.

Independent Learning (Prep)

Regularity

Year	Frequency	Hours per week or term	Main form or types
7	Languages involve learning new vocabulary and practice of grammatical structures.	2-3 hours per 6-week term.	Vocab learning and practise via memrise. Revision from knowledge organisers and online tests using Active Learn or Forms (core knowledge testing)
8	As a continuation from Year 7, homework in Year 8 takes the same basic shape.	4-5 hours per 6-week term.	Vocab learning and practise via memrise. Revision from knowledge organisers and online tests using Active Learn or Forms (core knowledge testing) Project work at the end of the year.
9	Students are set vocabulary revisions and some writing tasks.	4-5 hours per 6-week term.	Vocab learning and practise via memrise. Revision from knowledge organisers and online tests using Active Learn or Forms (core knowledge testing). Writing tasks are carried out in class and improvement work is set as homework once feedback has been given.
10	Typically, 1 piece a week, though this may vary. Revisions come additionally, especially when preparing for PPEs (pre public exams).	8 hours per 6-week term.	Vocab learning and practise via memrise. Workbooks are used for most of the homework. Students are assigned between 2 and 4 pages to do each week. Writing tasks are assigned to do in class, under near exam conditions, to avoid the use of devices. Speaking is practiced in lesson as well. Revision for tests and exams.
11	Typically, 1 piece a week, though this may vary. Revisions come additionally, especially when preparing for PPEs.	10 hours per 6-week term.	Vocab learning and practise via memrise. Workbooks are used for most of the homework. Students are assigned between 2 and 4 pages to do each week.

			Writing tasks are assigned to do in class, under near exam conditions, to avoid the use of devices. Speaking is practiced in lesson as well. Revision for tests and exams.
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Assessment

How we assess progress at KS3

Progress is assessed by the following

- Vocabulary tests
- Core knowledge tests
- Spelling tests
- Reading for Meaning tests
- Academic essays

In year 7 and 8, students are also assessed as being below, in line or above age expected progress, as defined by their baseline.
In year 9 students are also given a SAGE grade (Scholastic Excellence, Advanced, Good, Emerging).
This information is reported to parents three times a year in progress reports and further explained at parents' evenings.

How we assess progress at KS4

Progress is assessed by the following

- Exams
- Class based assignments
- Prep

Low stakes tests

GCSE grading is used to calculate current working grades (CWG) and projected performance grades (PPG).

Teaching and Learning

How we teach to the top

Our teaching method, which focuses on mastery and provides scaffolding for all students, regardless of their ability, is designed to prepare our students for success at A-Level.

Lessons are tailored towards the top 20% of the class, with targeted questioning used to check the understanding of current middle and lower ability students. Whole-class feedback is provided to remind students of basic knowledge, concepts, and vocabulary, and we take a 'no hands' approach to questioning to avoid giving a false impression of the general level of understanding of the class.

This approach ensures that no student is left behind, including those with SEND and disadvantaged students. Moreover, we celebrate intellectual curiosity and never stigmatize achievement, ensuring that our behaviour policy applies to students who voice negative opinions about the subject they study. By instilling a love of learning and a growth mindset, we help our students to develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed at A-Level and beyond.

How we ensure topics are introduced with direct instruction

At Key Stage 3, topics are introduced sequentially and outwards. First, we look at ourselves, our family, and our friends. We move on to what we do in our free time and focus on school and the wider community. In year 8 and 9, we observe our local area, technology, holidays and the wider world. Throughout these unit of studies are built all the fundamentals our students will need to flourish at Key Stage 4.

Explicit teaching is the key to a better and broader understanding of the subject and our teachers ensure that learning happens within the “big ideas” so students can readily reuse and recycle learning at a later stage.

As a topic progresses, opportunities are provided for application, experimentation, discussion, and further consideration.

Cultural Capital

How we develop cultural capital

Our department aims to present MFL as more than just an economic tool for achieving high GCSE grades or using in the workplace. Our teachers, who are mostly native speakers of French and Spanish, help students to develop a deep appreciation for the cultural differences and experiences that come with learning a new language. In lessons, we incorporate a range of cultural materials, including literature, music, and films, to help students understand the cultural context in which the language is spoken. We also offer foreign trips every year, which provide students with immersive cultural experiences and the opportunity to practice their language skills in a real-world setting. By promoting cultural awareness and appreciation, we help students to develop a broader understanding of the world and prepare them to be global citizens.

Additional Notes

Although we recognise that only a fraction of our GCSE students will continue studying a language post-16, we believe that we are contributing to their general knowledge and understanding of the world in ways they would not have been offered otherwise. Therefore, we recruit native speakers or highly able linguists to deliver the teaching of French and Spanish at Casterton.

Staffing

Head of Department	Elena Andrés
Teaching Staff (specialism where appropriate)	Spanish: Elena Andrés, Jenni Sarto, Will Goddard and Ana Charters. French: Jenni Sarto and Will Goddard.

KS3 MFL– Checkpoints, Key Assessment, and other assessments

Which assessment	How often?	What is the focus of the assessment?	What will it be measured on?	Communication to parents and students	Will resources be provided to help students prepare?
<i>Checkpoint</i>	Every fortnight for all years	Mixture of knowledge and skills	Vocabulary test and grammar low stakes tests online, in class. Results are reported in trackers to ensure the departments sees gaps in knowledge and address through subsequent lessons.	Via Edulink. Homework set as Low stakes test.	Online learning platforms for vocabulary. Students use memrise and access words lists through their groups. Specific levels are set and tested that match the lesson’s content.
<i>Key Assessment, Academic Essay and Reading for meaning test</i>	Every second term, or at the end of each unit.	All things seen in the unit to ensure mastery in the topic.	Results will be assessed on four skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking.	Via Edulink: “Prepare for your Key assessment. “	Resources will be made available online, via TEAMS and our usual learning platforms. Students will be issued with a workbook at the start of each unit to allow them to plan their revisions and keep on track with

					what needs to be known.
<i>Core Knowledge Test</i>	Every second term, or at the end of each unit.	A roundup of checkpoints to help prepare for the key assessments.	FORMS test in class.	Via Edulink. Students will be asked to revise all things from the start of topic.	Online learning platforms for vocabulary. Students can use Quizlet and access words lists through their stem sheets given in class. A link is also put in the homework.