

## Languages at BIST 2023 - 24

**Years 1 & 2** In KS1, children participate in Language Fun for 2 lessons per week. Four languages are taught over the year in rotating 9 week blocks. The languages are French, Georgian, German and Mandarin Chinese. The language rotation is a unique system which allows the children to get a 'taster' of different languages, making it easier for them to make an informed decision of which language they would like to study later on in their school life.

**Year 3** Students in Year 3 are taught languages for 3 lessons per week. Four languages are taught in rotating 9 week blocks. These languages are French, German, Mandarin and Georgian.

**Years 4 to 6** Students are taught languages for 3 lessons per week. Four languages are taught in rotating 9 week blocks. These languages are French, German, Spanish and Georgian.

**Year 7 & 8** Students choose which language they wish to study, with the aim of continuing this language towards an IGCSE qualification. They can choose to study French, German, or Spanish. These lessons take place twice a week. In addition, the children study one lesson of Georgian as a first language, Georgian as a second language, **or** Russian as a first language per week.

**Year 9** Students continue with their chosen language, however these are now studied for 3 lessons per week.

**Years 10 & 11** During KS4 students continue with their chosen language (French, German or Spanish) in preparation for the IGCSE exams for 3 lessons per week. The students also receive 1 lesson per week of Georgian at either first language or foreign language level.

**Years 12 & 13** We currently offer the International Cambridge A level qualification for French, German, and Spanish at BIST.

**Language Rotations - why?** The decision to have children in Years 1 to 6 rotate through different languages is based on empirical evidence, pedagogical research and a request by parents for the children to be able to study more languages. A growing number of international schools are following similar models. Research into language acquisition and neuroscience at universities in as diverse places as Liverpool, Dublin, Canberra, Toronto and Haifa also support this concept. Meta-analysis of such research suggests that learning multiple languages increases our capacity not only for learning languages, but for all learning. The suggestion being that learning varied languages develops children's cognitive skills as learners.

The long term goals of our language programme are to develop learners and their skills in learning and to give them informed options when they approach examination subject choices. Hence we are looking at the 'long game' rather than any perceived short term mastery.

It is also important to view the languages programme as a subject like Mathematics or Geography rather than subdivisions like French, German, or Spanish. Mathematics in particular has varied 'languages' within it, however in Mathematics we do not concentrate purely on one aspect ('language') of the subject for a whole year. It is also important to consider the concept of 'less is more' within the languages programme. Is it fair, academically sound or practical for a child's academic future to set a language at the age of 7 that they are then 'stuck with' for the rest of their school life? Studying a variety of languages throughout the year allows the excitement of new learning and experiences to continue.