



# Language Learning

A World of Opportunities

Learning together  
inspiring success

# A World of Language Opportunities

## **The following objectives lie at the heart of language provision at BSB:**

- To enable students to understand and use a range of European languages effectively, in particular the national languages of Belgium
- To help students gain insight into the life and culture of countries where the target languages are spoken
- To instil a positive attitude to the learning of additional languages and to encourage personal contact with speakers of those languages within the host community and beyond
- To support and extend development of the mother tongue for francophone and Dutch-speaking students
- To support English as an Additional Language (EAL) enabling students to access the curriculum fully through the medium of English

## Introduction

Since it was inaugurated in 1969, The British School of Brussels has been committed to language learning. The school's philosophy and objectives acknowledge that language learning and the associated cultural awareness that it brings is a key element of the BSB education. French has always been a core subject throughout the School from the age of 3 to the age of 16, by which time all students will have taken the IGCSE examination.

*“As the linguistic requirements of the international world change, we continue to look at how best to provide for our students.”*

When a second compulsory additional language was added to the curriculum, the study of German became an additional core subject for 11 to 14 year olds. In 2005 the choice of second additional language was diversified and students now choose to take Dutch, German or Spanish in Years 7-9. Many continue with this second language until IGCSE in Year 11.

Language teaching is provided by a team of dedicated, highly qualified and highly motivated teachers, including both UK-trained and mother tongue teachers. BSB students achieve excellent results in public examinations, the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) at age 15/16 years and GCE A Levels or the IB Diploma at age 18 years.

We continue to look at how best to cater to their linguistic needs in the changing international environment, and are always looking at the possible introduction of world languages such as Mandarin and Arabic, which would facilitate more of our students pursuing these increasingly popular courses at university.

# Languages in Primary School (ages 1-11)

## Mainstream French

At BSB Primary students are introduced to French right at the beginning of their school career with one lesson a week of oral French in Kindergarten and two in Reception. This increases to four lessons a week in Years 1 and 2. The work is oral/aural and the emphasis is on learning through fun; language is reinforced through songs, games, role plays, and stories. From Year 3 onwards French provision caters for the different levels from beginners to fluent speakers through extensive setting. Elements of reading and writing are introduced in Year 3, and developed in Year 4, but the classes are still largely oral-based. In Years 5 and 6 a more systematic approach to reading, writing and grammatical awareness is introduced.

## French fluent speakers

Students who are fluent in French have access to the Bilingual section which runs throughout Primary School.

## Bilingual French/English

### **Bilingual - Biliterate - Bicultural students**

Bilingual classes are available for all children from ages 4 - 14 years. The aims of the French/English bilingual section are:

- high levels of proficiency in students' first language and a second language (English/French)
- reading and writing at grade level in both languages
- academic achievement at, or above, grade level
- positive intercultural attitudes and behaviour

The children follow the same broad, balanced BSB curriculum as their peers in the English section. Subjects are taught in both languages with a 50/50 English/French balance.

Students' progress in English language and French language is measured against the learning objectives of the respective national systems. Children in the bilingual section should be able to transfer to the English section if necessary and on to other British-style schools on leaving BSB. French language levels should be high enough to transfer to the French system or a bilingual system if necessary or desired, dependent on their years of experience.

# Dutch Mother Tongue

A Dutch mother tongue programme is available for students in Years 3-6 of Primary School.

Students follow a curriculum devised for our BSB Dutch speakers taught by a highly qualified, motivated mother tongue speaker, supported by a mother tongue Learning Assistant. The aim of the course is to maintain and develop mother tongue proficiency in the language. It is delivered through differentiation in the weekly timetabled lesson and an additional extra-curricular lesson.

## Dutch as an Additional Language

### Years 3-6 (ages 7-11)

Students in Years 3-6 with no knowledge of Dutch receive one compulsory lesson per week of Dutch as an additional language. The aim of the course is for students to develop an awareness of the language while learning how to carry out basic day-to-day interactions in order to communicate with members of our host community. The course is taught largely through role-plays, games and songs.

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# Languages in Secondary School (ages 11-18)

All languages in Secondary School are taught in dedicated language teaching rooms which are fully equipped with audiovisual equipment (CD/DVD players, projectors and interactive whiteboards) and have internet access. A dedicated soundproofed oral examination suite is available with five individual offices where orals can be conducted without interruption or distraction.

## Mainstream French

### Years 7-11 (ages 11-16)

The Secondary French Department caters for the full range of ability and experience, with a dedicated Extension set in each year up to Year 11 (ages 15-16), and a beginners' set in Year 7. Provision is also made for beginners in subsequent years through lunchtime catch-up classes. At the end of Year 11 mainstream language students sit the IGCSE (Second Language) examination. Students in the most advanced mainstream group follow an accelerated programme leading to IGCSE in Year 10, followed by an enriched French course in Year 11 that provides excellent preparation for A Level or French Language B in Years 12/13. Year 10 students in the accelerated group benefit from a well established exchange programme with Lycée Georges de La Tour in Metz, France.

### Post-16 (ages 16-18)

At Post-16 students can either take the A Level course or French IB language 'B' at Higher or Standard Level, or, if they have never studied the language before, at ab initio level (the latter being a two year course for complete beginners). All Post-16 students studying French take part in an exchange programme with students from l'Institut des Soeurs de Notre-Dame, a francophone school in Anderlecht.

## French Fluent Speakers Extension Group

### (Years 7-11)

Students in the Extension group follow a specially designed fluent-speaker programme which includes the study of literature and elements of literary analysis, and which ultimately leads to the IGCSE (First Language) examination in Year 11 (ages 15-16). The great majority of students in the Extension sets in Years 7 to 9 (ages 11 - 14) are members of the bilingual tutor group, for whom a number of curricular subjects are delivered partly or fully in French, allowing students to experience at least 30% of the curriculum in that language.

### Post-16 (ages 16-18)

Students who have followed the Extension programme are ideally prepared to take French Language 'A' (mother tongue) in Years 12-13, as part of the IB Diploma programme. The Language 'A' course combines the study of Language in Context, and Literature. Students take part in a programme of theatre visits which includes performances of some of the set texts. Students taking French 'A' in the Diploma programme alongside English 'A' or Dutch 'A' are eligible for the prestigious IB Bilingual Diploma.

# Dutch Mother Tongue

In the Second Additional Language block in Years 7 – 9 provision is made for fluent speakers of Dutch in a class that runs alongside the Additional Language class. The students in this class follow a mother tongue course that will ultimately lead to the First Language IGCSE in Year 11.

## Years 7-11 (ages 11-16)

Dutch-speakers in Years 7-9 may choose to study the language at mother tongue level during the timetabled Second Language lessons. The three hours of teaching per week are delivered by a teacher/ mother-tongue Learning Assistant team, thus allowing full differentiation for Second language and mother tongue students. In addition, Dutch-speaking students may also participate in Dutch mother tongue lessons once a week after school. The course is intended for students who are fluent and wish to grow as native Dutch speakers and writers. It is ideal preparation for fluent speakers who intend to take the IGCSE (First Language) examination, and/or the Dutch Language 'A' option in the IB Diploma.

## Post-16 (ages 16-18)

Fluent Dutch speakers entering Year 12 at BSB have the opportunity to take Dutch as their Language 'A' option within the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme. The Language 'A' course is only accessible to fluent speakers and requires in-depth study of literary works, as well as analysis of the function and purpose of language in a range of contexts. Upon successful completion of the Dutch 'A' course alongside either English Language 'A' or French Language 'A', students will be awarded the prestigious IB Bilingual Diploma.



# Dutch as an Additional Language

## **Years 7-9 (ages 11-14)**

Students choosing Dutch as their second additional language in Year 7 will continue the course in Years 8 and 9. The course is built around the dual elements of grammatical knowledge and oral proficiency, developed through a range of authentic activities, role-playing and games.

## **Years 10-11 (ages 14-16)**

In Year 10 students who have completed the course in Years 7-9 can opt to continue for a further two years to receive IGCSE (Second Language) certification in Dutch. 100% of BSB candidates entered at this level achieve grades A\*-C. As part of the course, students take part in an exchange with a Dutch-speaking school in Lier.

## **Post-16 (ages 16-18)**

Post-16 students can either follow the Oxford and Cambridge Board Dutch AS/A Level course, or Dutch IB Language 'B' at Higher or Standard Level. Students following these courses will master a variety of linguistic skills and develop a deeper knowledge of Dutch-speaking countries and cultures.



# German as an Additional Language

## Years 7-11 (ages 11-16)

Students can choose German as their second additional language in Year 7 to 9. German as an Additional Language classes tend to be small, supportive and committed, and taught by mother tongue speakers. The course includes a biennial visit to Aachen for Year 7 and Year 8 students. Students continuing German in Year 10 also take part in the very popular and rewarding trip to Berlin. IGCSE certification is achieved at the end of Year 11. 100% of candidates entered at this level have achieved grades A\*-C and in recent years up to 90% of candidates have achieved A\* or A.

## Post-16 (ages 16-18)

At Post-16 students can either take the A Level course or German IB Language 'B' at Higher or Standard Level. Students following this course will develop a deeper knowledge of German speaking countries and cultures. All Year 12 students have the opportunity to visit Berlin with the Year 10 Trip. Success rates in German are high, with 100% A\*-C at A Level and 100% grades 5-7 in IB Diploma.

*"Classes tend to be small, supportive and committed, and taught by mother tongue speakers"*

# Spanish as an Additional Language

## Years 7-11 (ages 11-16)

Spanish is an extremely popular choice as a second additional language in Years 7-9. Students are highly motivated and extremely successful. The majority of students who take Spanish in Years 7-9 choose to carry on with Spanish in Years 10-11 and sit the IGCSE. One of the highlights of the IGCSE programme is the annual trip to El Puerto de Santa María in Cadiz where students experience true Spanish family life and use their language skills for a real purpose.

100% of BSB candidates entered for IGCSE achieve grades A\*-C. On several occasions in recent years 100% of students achieved either A\* or A.

## Post-16 (ages 16-18)

At Post-16 level, students who have already completed the IGCSE course can either take the A Level course or Spanish IB Language 'B' at Higher or Standard Level. Many Year 12 students also take advantage of the Year 10 trip to Cádiz.

# Whole School

## English as an Additional Language

At BSB we welcome families from all around the world. The English as an Additional Language (EAL) Department is proud of its structured and sensitive approach to teaching English and to preparing students for successful study in the mainstream. We aim to provide effective language and pastoral support at every level from Kindergarten to Year 13.

Great emphasis is placed on building self-confidence, positive communication, cooperation and respect for every individual. All lessons are taught by experienced EAL specialists and classrooms are welcoming and well resourced. Teaching methods combine both pre-teaching and revising/reinforcing key vocabulary, key concepts and mainstream classroom texts.

## Extra-curricular activities and special events to support language learning

In Primary, there are well-established French and Dutch Clubs. German and Russian Clubs are also offered enabling students to use the language in a stress-free and fun environment. In Secondary, the Languages Club generally focuses on celebrations and cultural events. Russian, Latin and French Drama clubs also operate when there is enough student interest. The recently introduced Mandarin Club is also very popular among students wishing to learn the basics of the language.

There are numerous out of school visits across the School. In Primary, there are French Department visits to Stockel Market, Planète Chocolat, Mini-Europe and the Musée de la Bande Dessinée as well as cross-curricular trips to Archéosite and Luxembourg. In Secondary, there are residential trips to the French Alps, Berlin and Cádiz.

There are also significant language elements in the Secondary School visits to Mechelen and Aachen, the Art trips to Tom Frantzen's workshop, the Fondation Folon, and the Year 9 sailing trip to France. Theatre visits are organised for Post-16 students of French and for Extension group students in Years 10 and 11.

## Links with local schools

Links with local schools have been developed through the Speakacademy Language Agency and there is an established exchange programme between Post-16 students of French and their counterparts at l'Institut des Soeurs de Notre-Dame in Anderlecht. A similar exchange operates between students taking Dutch in Years 9-10, and their counterparts at Sint Gummaruscollege in Lier.

## Book Week

The biennial Book Week is a major event on the BSB calendar. For the past three events, the Languages Department has been able to bring in Belgian authors who write principally in French or Dutch. Additional authors representing other world languages are also invited.



## **The British School of Brussels** **An international learning community**

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