



4th November, 2009

Dear Parents

Languages at Queen Mary's

The Department of Languages would like to welcome your daughter to Queen Mary's Senior School and at the same time wish her well in her learning of foreign languages over the next few years. May we also take this opportunity to clarify the school's policy for language learning and development which we feel would be helpful to you and your daughter as she progresses through the school.

Language is a core subject at Queen Mary's. Language learning skills are vital to the development of analytical thought, to lucid and accurate expression, and so to learning across the curriculum, especially English. They are particularly relevant to the learning of new languages later in life, whichever that language might be. Each modern and classical language offers a different mix of skills. At Queen Mary's we aim to present each child with sufficient challenge to develop those skills to the limit of her ability, using the more complex languages (German and Latin) to develop her grammatical analysis. Fluency in a particular language is a desirable outcome, though the primary aim remains the development of the ability to learn. All language lessons, including the classics, include contextual material about the society, civilisation, history and literature of the parent countries.

All children learn French from Year 1. Those who join the school later are offered extra catch-up classes for their first term or two. In Years 8 and 9 German is taught to the more able linguists while Spanish is taught to those who would struggle with the greater complexities of German grammar.

In Year 8 all girls are also taught Latin. As the language from which most of the modern European languages are derived, some knowledge of Latin is desirable and provides a vital understanding of the grammatical structures and possibilities of communication that are basic to all of them. This affords skills which will support all of their academic subjects. Latin may no longer be spoken, but it lives on in very many ways, not least in the beauty of its own literature, which the girls are taught to appreciate. At Queen Mary's we believe that a sound knowledge of the Classical world is essential to a good education and to this end we provide courses in Latin, Greek and Classical Civilisation. Those who find Latin helpful continue with it as a language in Year 9; the remainder continue to study Classical Civilisation, history and literature.

All pupils take one language (usually French) at GCSE. Some may opt in addition to take one or more of Latin, German or Spanish (Spanish is available only as a Foundation Certificate of Secondary Education). Classical Greek is taught by request outside the normal timetable.

We are sure that you will appreciate that in these, as in all areas of the curriculum, we are concerned to do our best for your daughters. We look forward to your support and encouragement in the teaching of Modern Foreign Languages and Classics. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Clare Phillips (Head of Modern Foreign Languages)

Mr John Payne (Head of Classics)