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Dear Parents/Guardians of Year 7 Pupils

### Languages Choices in Year 8

We are writing to update you on the language offer at Arden for our current Year 7 students as they progress into Year 8.

At Arden, the languages department has a shared vision, to 'Build Citizens of the World'. The curriculum we offer develops an appreciation of other cultures across the world, including literature, film, music and the Arts. This is not just limited to the country of origin; we explore examples of culture across the globe – wherever the 'target' language may be spoken.

Studying a language brings many advantages, including enhanced cognitive development and improved communication skills and this is why all children at Arden, regardless of ability, study a language until the end of Year 9. We strongly encourage all children to then take a language at GCSE.

We are now able to offer Year 8 students a choice of three languages. Your child will now be able to choose whether to continue with French, or whether to take up German or Spanish instead. The purpose of this is to allow your child to focus on one language for the next two years, which will increase attainment levels for everyone and hopefully give all students more confidence to select a language to study at GCSE.

In previous years we were only able to offer a choice of languages in the spring term of Year 9. Students all continued with French but could also choose to study German or Spanish as well. This means that the amount of time spent preparing students for German or Spanish GCSE is limited. By bringing the language choice earlier in KS3 we will increase the time available for their chosen language and all students will be better prepared for their GCSE. For those who choose not to study a language at GCSE, they will still develop better linguistic skills by the end of Year 9.

Regardless of current attainment levels in French during Year 7, your child will be able to select either French, German or Spanish. We will emphasise to them that swapping from French to either German or Spanish is not an easier or more difficult option. The amount of work needed to study any language is the same, as are the learning and revision techniques they will need to use to do well.

We have already spoken to your child about this language choice in an assembly. Over the course of the next few days, they will be given a 'taster lesson' for German and Spanish. They will have the opportunity to ask their languages teacher any questions that they may have. **Once this process has been completed, we will ask your child to rank the three languages in order of preference.**

Whichever language your child opts for, at this point in time, that is the language they will continue to study until the end of Year 9. **There will not be another opportunity to change their language choice**, other than to select to continue with that subject at GCSE level.

In order to help any discussions, you may choose to have with your child to help them select their order, here is a short synopsis of each language. We have also produced responses to Frequently Asked Questions - regarding language choices:

#### German:



Speaking German invites students to think in a logical manner. It shares many words with English, with both being Germanic languages, and has accessible pronunciation. Our practice and expertise help to render this an exciting programme of study for all students. Many of our children enjoy decoding seemingly 'untranslatable' compound nouns as well as learning through songs, poetry and films.

**French:**

Not only will French widen perspectives, but it opens up the possibility for students to live and work in five continents. Francophone countries have rich and varied cultures that we enjoy exploring through songs, poetry and films. Having started French in Year 7, continuing in Year 8 and 9 really allows students to consolidate their language learning and to gain the confidence needed to undertake a GCSE in the subject.

**Spanish:**

Is widely spoken globally and makes for a fascinating subject for later study at GCSE, particularly for those interested in history, politics and creative subjects. Known as one of the 'romance' languages, it offers a rich cultural context to excite students. It may be that you have visited Spain on holiday so again your child may know a few words and as they get older may have the opportunity to practise more. Spanish words are pronounced phonetically so students make rapid progress with 'speaking' Spanish.

Key information about taking a language at Arden:

- ALL children in Years 7, 8 and 9 must study one foreign language.
- This year we are introducing the opportunity to specialise in one language at the start of Year 8.
- MOST children will study their first choice of language. Every effort will be made to ensure they can study their first choice, but it may not be possible in all cases.
- A small number of children in Year 8, continuing into Year 9 will join an accelerated linguist programme, as a co-curricular club, in which they study a second language. All children will be welcome to join the club, regardless of initial linguistic ability. However, due to the nature of the learning, it will probably be those who develop a keen love of languages and maintain a high level of attainment that will continue with the programme.
- When choosing GCSE options for languages, all children will be able to study the subject they were learning in school during Years 8 and 9.
- If your child is also part of the accelerated linguist programme, they will be able to study the language they learnt in that co-curricular club or take both languages.
- When selecting a language to study at GCSE, it is essential that the subject must have been studied during Years 8 & 9 as a prior level of knowledge has to be assumed, similar to maths or English.

If you have any questions at this stage, please can you read through the FAQs below, which we hope will provide the information you require.

Yours sincerely



**Miss L Page**

Deputy Headteacher and Director of MFL

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## **Languages Choices in Year 8 - FAQs**

### **Will my child be able to explain why they would like to study a particular language?**

There will be an opportunity on the form to let the school know if they live with a native speaker. This will be the only reason to prioritise their inclusion into a specific language.

Reasons such as a native speaking grandparent or other relative, or frequent holidays to a specific country will NOT be accepted as a sufficiently good reason.

### **What is the process for determining which language my child is allocated?**

Most children will get their first choice. However, some will not due to the limitations of the timetable. The benefits of studying a language hold true regardless of which language is taken. Cultural awareness, cognitive development and communication skills will be improved by the study of any language subject. Research into language learning also shows that once a student 'learns' how to learn a language, they find it very easy to pick up second and third languages.

For the allocation of the language group, if, for example, more children select Spanish than we have classes scheduled, then any child with a Spanish speaker living with them at home will be prioritised. Everyone else will undergo a random draw and those children, selected at random, will be offered their second choice of language. The same process will continue if we are unable to offer the second choice.

### **My child loves languages and would like to learn more than one. Is that possible?**

Yes, we will offer a co-curricular opportunity for students who really enjoy languages to study an additional language outside normal school hours. The additional benefit of this 'dual linguistics' programme is that the learning will be very much directed by the student - allowing for accelerated progress if that is appropriate.

We will talk more to all students about being a 'dual linguist' during their language lessons.

There is no need to inform the school of your child's wish to study more than one language at this point.

### **Will my child be able to study a language at GCSE that they did not study in Years 8-9?**

No. For example, if your child studied French in Years 8-9, they could not then select German or Spanish GCSE. However, if your child has followed the dual linguist route described above, then they can select either or both languages at GCSE.

### **At home we speak another language that you do not offer. Can my child study that instead?**

In terms of timetabled lessons, we are only able to teach French, German and Spanish.

Some of our students speak a huge range of languages at home: Russian, Persian, Urdu, Catalan, Italian, Ukrainian, Cantonese, Mandarin...the list is long. Some of these students ask to be entered for one of these languages along with their other exams in Year 11. We do not enter students any earlier than Year 11. As long as we are able to find a specialist to support with the speaking exam, we can consider this for your child. We also ask for evidence that they achieve well in this language in speaking, reading, writing and listening so that it does not have an impact on their other subjects.

All children at Arden will study either French, German or Spanish in school until the end of Year 9, regardless of any other language they additionally study at home.

### **How will you communicate all this information with my child?**

We have already begun this process with an assembly, outlining the information in this letter and the choices available. During the next few lessons your child's language teacher will repeat the key information in this letter and also deliver a 'taster lesson' for French, German and Spanish.