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**Dear Parents/Guardians of Year 8 Students (Year 9 September 2023)**

### **Year 8 – Language Choices for Year 9**

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.

As your child moves into Year 9, we are able to offer three languages. All students will continue with French, but some may opt to additionally take up German or Spanish. This would entail taking an accelerated course in the new language in combination with their French lessons. Because of the academic demand of studying an accelerated programme, we recommend that your child only opt for a second language if they are an able linguist. If they are unsure about this, they should talk to their class teacher.

Your child will study one of the following options:

1. Continue with French only
2. French and Spanish
3. French and German

We will ask your child to rank the three language option choices in order of preference.

We have already spoken to your child about this language choice in an assembly. Over 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 complete a form, to rank the three languages 'options' in order of preference.**

We will emphasise to all the children that swapping from French only to either German+French or Spanish+French is not an easier option. Every year some students who do not enjoy the study of language mistakenly choose to study two languages instead of one during Year 9. There is a misconception that choosing an additional language will dilute the challenge of studying French alone. Unfortunately, this is not the case; the amount of work needed to study any language is the same, as are the learning and revision techniques students use to do well. So, studying two languages simultaneously is twice the work.



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In order to help any discussions, you may choose to have with your child to help them select their language option, here is a short synopsis of the two new languages. 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.

**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.
- In Year 9 the MAJORITY of children will study their first choice of language option. Every effort will be made to ensure they can study their first choice, but it may not be possible in all cases.
- When choosing GCSE options for languages all children will be able to study French.
- Only those children who also study German or Spanish, in Year 9, will be able to select German or Spanish GCSE.

**As indicated above, we will be asking your child to complete a form in class, to indicate their language preference for next year.**

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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## 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?**

Vast majority of children will get their first choice. However, some will not due to the limitations of the timetable.

For the allocation of the language group, if, for example, more children select Spanish+French 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.

**Will my child be able to study a language at GCSE that they did not study in year 9? No.**

For example, if your child only studied French in Year 9, they could not then select German or Spanish GCSE.

If a child studies French+Spanish in Year 9, they can select either language.

**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 the school to enter them 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 at least one language 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 German and Spanish

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