



Curriculum Manifesto Document – v.9 – October 2025 – Cedars



Our vision:

In a fast-changing world where young people are true global citizens, we believe that learning a foreign language is of benefit to every child. Our purpose is to equip students with the skills, knowledge and character to communicate, converse and thrive in the modern world.

We want our students to be confident linguists who have strong knowledge that they can use both in and outside the classroom. As described in the national curriculum, our vision is to develop secure foundations through reinforcement and repetition so that students know how to learn a language independently. We are dedicated to developing both linguistic skills and cultural understanding in our students, through a curriculum that encourages resilience, independence, curiosity and resourcefulness, and ultimately inspires a love for languages.

Our Lionheart community:

There are 9 secondary schools currently within the Lionheart Trust. Our schools serve a range of different communities which present different challenges and opportunities for language teaching. Schools in Leicester City have a higher proportion of multilingual students, whereas those in the North and West of Leicestershire and into Derbyshire have predominantly monolingual intakes.

Each school has an intake which consists of students from many different feeder primary schools, who have varying levels of exposure to foreign language learning in primary schools.

At Cedars we teach French in 3 x 50 minute lessons per week. We teach one language so that pupils can focus on this and fully develop their skills across five or seven years.

Most students continue to study French at KS4 and our curriculum is designed to ensure that students build strong foundations in Years 7, 8 and 9 that will allow them to succeed at GCSE, A-level and beyond, whilst remaining relevant, enjoyable and purposeful for all.

Our aim is to ensure that whatever students' prior knowledge and experience, they can make rapid progress in secondary school and to feel confident and successful in their French lessons. We adapt how we implement the Lionheart curriculum in order to best meet the needs of our students, underpinned by our core knowledge specifications and shared assessments which have been developed by the Lionheart team of HoDs working closely together with the subject lead.



The curriculum model:

Our curriculum builds students' knowledge in 3 core areas which are vital for confidence and success in language learning:

- Rich vocabulary knowledge
- Phonemic awareness
- Knowledge of grammatical structures

Our topic areas are selected in order to sequence and interleave this content to ensure students have multiple opportunities to revisit key language and secure their understanding of grammatical structures. For example, in the Year 8 topic of Free Time, students learn to express opinions of a range of infinitive verbs. Having learnt this, they can use the same infinitives to form the near future tense. Later in the year, in the topic of Town, they reuse these infinitives to apply in more sophisticated sentence structures using modal verbs (eg: there is a ... where you can...), which also draws upon Y7 learning saying what there is and is not in their school. Our topics also allow us to explore the culture of target language countries, for example by discussing different foods, regions and festivals in French speaking countries. The topic of Careers is taught in Year 9 and allows us to highlight ways in which learning a language creates future opportunities for our students in terms of study, travel and employment.

In Years 10 and 11, we follow the Pearson Edexcel curriculum for GCSE French, including use of the ActiveHub textbooks and resources. This ensures that we can collaborate and share resources and best practice with the Trust as we work together to understand the criteria for the new GCSE. Schools and teachers also create their own resources to provide additional practice of key grammar structures, to keep lessons engaging, and to support students' written and spoken production.

Teaching and Learning:

Phonics are taught explicitly using a range of strategies including teacher modelling (reading aloud), choral repetition, students reading aloud, and games. Teachers encourage students to reflect and identify rules and patterns, and to apply them to decode new words. Activities such as dictation are used to practise and assess students' awareness of Sound Spelling Correspondences. Key phonemes are highlighted regularly in lessons, referring back to familiar KS2/3 vocabulary such as numbers and colours to help students to remember SSCs.

Vocabulary is carefully selected, prioritising high frequency words that can be reused in a variety of different contexts. This avoids excessive cognitive load and allows students to effectively deploy prior learning in new topic areas. Equally, we aim to extend students' vocabulary knowledge beyond the minimum, to allow them to express themselves on topics of interest (eg: food and sports vocabulary beyond the narrow range in GCSE specifications).



Core vocabulary for each unit is provided to students in Knowledge Organisers and forms the backbone of the curriculum. This language is reviewed regularly in start of lesson retrieval and through homework, to promote long-term retention, and the sequencing of the curriculum ensures that students encounter key vocabulary at regular intervals throughout their language studies.

Grammatical structures are taught predominantly through repetition and input flooding. Students encounter target structures repeatedly in written and spoken texts, and practise them in translation games, on mini-whiteboards, and using sentence builders. This allows students to spot patterns and to build automaticity in their written and spoken production. Vocabulary and grammar teaching go hand-in-hand through the teaching of high frequency phrases or chunks, such as “je suis allé au cinéma” which familiarise students with the past tense of a key irregular verb and the contraction of à + le. When students are familiar with these structures and can understand and use them from memory, teachers can then explain the grammar that underpins them and provide deliberate practice opportunities for manipulating the structure.

Teachers in all schools draw on a range of evidence-based approaches to teaching Languages, which include:

- Metacognition (the Learning Scientists) – especially the use of retrieval practice, interleaving, spaced practice and dual coding.
- Rosenshine’s Principles – beginning lessons with a review of prior learning, presenting new information in small chunks with lots of questioning, and ensuring enough time is given to deliberate practice to obtain a high success rate before proceeding to independent production.
- Reciprocal Reading – equipping students with strategies to find meaning in challenging texts by predicting, clarifying, questioning and summarising.
- Strategies based on the work of Gianfranco Conti and Steve Smith – these link strongly to the approaches from the Learning Scientists and Rosenshine, but with a specific awareness of how students learn languages, and emphasis on aural processing, phonics and lexicogrammar.

Homework:

We believe that the most critical thing for students to do beyond the classroom is to review their learning in order to secure vocabulary and grammar knowledge in their long-term memory. Homework frequently involves learning key vocabulary or structures from a Knowledge Organiser and applying it to retrieval activities often using online platforms.



Assessment:

Students are assessed continually by teachers using a variety of formative assessment strategies. Questioning (including cold calling) allows teachers to gauge students' understanding, and mini-whiteboards are frequently used for both multiple choice quizzing and writing/translation practice. Teachers circulate in lessons and give instant feedback on students' work, to address misconceptions and hold students to high standards.

Low stakes retrieval activities at the start of lessons and for homework are also a key form of assessment and give the teacher and student feedback as to how much knowledge has been remembered or understood.

At KS4, formal assessments are predominantly GCSE examination papers, with 2 full trial exam series in Year 11 and one in Year 10. Students all experience one or two full trial speaking examinations during KS4 to support their preparation for their final exams. These give students a clear understanding of how they are doing and allow teachers to effectively decide tier entries.

Year 11 students complete a knowledge baseline in September which assesses their recall of high frequency vocabulary, key verbs in a range of tenses, receptive topic vocabulary, and finally their application in a translation task. This allows teachers to intervene early at class or individual level where there are gaps in knowledge.

Prior to their trial exams in the summer term, Year 10 complete unit assessments which train them in the skills needed for the GCSE exams. These include 80-90 word and 130-150 word writing tasks and Listening/Reading assessments based on the Pearson ActiveHub resources. KS4 assessments are all common across the Trust which allows for moderation and standardisation to support accurate judgements and predictions.

At KS3, we have key Trust-wide assessments in place for Writing skills, with predominantly 40–50-word tasks in Y7 and 80–90-word tasks in Y8 and Y9, alongside Translation to test knowledge and application of core vocabulary. We currently have end-of-year Listening and Reading assessments for Y7 and Y8, which are under review to ensure that we equip students as effectively as possible for the requirements of the new GCSE and real-world communication. We also conduct internal assessments to monitor student progress and provide regular feedback between the key Trust-wide data points.