



Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) Policy

September 2026

1. Introduction

Language competence and intercultural understanding are an important part of being a citizen in the 21st century. Language skills support understanding between people in our own communities and across the world, while helping pupils to appreciate the languages, cultures and traditions of others.

Learning a foreign language provides pupils with an opportunity to look beyond their own experiences and develop curiosity about the world. A high-quality languages education enables pupils to express ideas and thoughts in another language and to understand and respond to speakers in speech and writing. It also provides opportunities to communicate for practical purposes, develop new ways of thinking and build foundations for learning further languages.

At Firs Primary School, the majority of pupils are multilingual. Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and almost 50 languages are spoken across the school. There is also a high level of pupil mobility, with many children joining during Key Stage 2 from other English primary schools or as direct entrants from abroad. Pupils move on to a range of secondary schools where they may study French, Spanish or German at Key Stage

2. Purpose

The National Curriculum for Modern Foreign Languages aims to ensure that all children:

- Understand and respond to spoken and written language from a variety of authentic sources.
- Speak with increasing confidence, fluency and spontaneity, finding ways to communicate what they want to say, including through discussion and asking questions. Pupils should continually improve the accuracy of their pronunciation and intonation.
- Write at varying length, for different purposes and audiences, using a range of grammatical structures that they have learnt.
- Discover and develop an appreciation of a range of writing in the language studied.

A high-quality languages education should foster children's curiosity and deepen their understanding of the world. At Firs Primary School, we are committed to ensuring that awareness in another language enables children to interpret, create and exchange meaning within and across cultures. It also helps children develop skills that can open further opportunities later in life.

Learning a foreign language allows pupils to develop transferable skills and language-learning strategies whilst increasing their awareness of different countries and cultures. At Firs Primary School, children can learn a range of modern foreign languages as part of the school's curriculum, underpinned by the 'Discovering Language' approach.

The Discovering Language programme is based upon the 'Language Awareness' vision of language learning set out by Professor Eric Hawkins in his 2005 paper in The Language Learning Journal. It was developed by the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), with support from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

Hawkins proposed that language learning should fall into two stages: Stage 1 (5–14 years) should be 'educational foreign language learning', followed by 'instrumental' language learning in Stage 2 (14–19 years).

Discovering Languages

Discovering Language aims to meet the requirements of Hawkins' Stage 1 educational language learning, which includes:

- 'Training of the ear'.
- Grammar study and analysis of patterns.
- A focus on meaning.
- Intercultural encounters and immersion experiences.
- An accessible 'apprenticeship' language.

It is an adaptable, multilingual model which can be delivered by non-specialists. Through Discovering Language, pupils can study four or more languages from a variety of language families, as well as non-language-specific modules exploring language features. This enables children to become aware of similarities and differences between languages, while developing their understanding of the origins and purposes of language.

The benefits of Discovering Language instead of the typical single-language model studied at primary level include:

- Developing pupils' knowledge and understanding of how language works, preparing them for learning different languages at Key Stage 3.
- Each language introduced builds sequentially on pupils' knowledge of grammar, patterns and language-learning strategies.
- Providing opportunities for language learning to be delivered flexibly within a well-planned and ambitious primary curriculum. Language learning can be linked to topics being studied, providing meaningful cross-curricular links, for example studying Latin alongside the Romans and Greeks in History.
- Providing an adaptable, multilingual model which can be delivered by non-specialists. This is important because, unlike in secondary schools, primary teachers are rarely language specialists. Teachers can learn alongside the children, encouraging pupils to view language learning as a desirable and lifelong skill.
- Providing an opportunity to celebrate and value the linguistic diversity of our school community and ensure that the curriculum reflects our local context. We have been able to include two community languages within our bespoke model: Russian and Roma.
- Giving pupils valuable experience of language learning while developing strategies for decoding the meaning of unfamiliar languages.
- Using multimedia and community resources to support the teaching of new languages.
- Facilitating mixed-age rolling programme planning through language change.
- Enabling KS2 teachers to utilise their grammatical knowledge and make links between languages to enhance vocabulary acquisition.
- Providing pupils with a broad and rich curriculum experience through learning several languages and cultures.
- Enabling substantial progress in one language to be achieved in Year 6 through specialist input from a bilingual teaching assistant.

- Reducing the impact of language changes when pupils move between schools and teachers move between year groups. This is particularly important for our school, which has significantly above-average levels of pupil mobility. Many pupils arrive at different points during Key Stage 2 with varying levels of foreign language experience.
- Allowing languages to be chosen according to staff expertise, community needs, curriculum links, available resources and KS3 transition.
- Supporting positive attitudes towards language learning and encouraging pupils to continue studying languages beyond Key Stage 4.

3. Implementation

Each of the languages chosen as part of our 'Discovering Languages' approach has been carefully selected for the benefits it offers our pupils. Children in Key Stage 2 have a weekly language lesson of 30–45 minutes. Key learning is revisited throughout the week to support children in embedding the vocabulary they have learned.

Our curriculum operates on a two-year cycle. In Years 3 and 4, children learn either German or Latin, while in Years 5 and 6, they learn either Spanish or Russian.

Latin is studied in Year 3 and 4. As an ancient language, the focus is to provide a linguistic foundation for reading comprehension and an appreciation of classical civilisation. The study of Latin provides many opportunities to explore etymology (word origins), which supports spelling and vocabulary in the English language. It also enables teachers to build upon cross-curricular learning opportunities arising from the study of Greek and Roman civilisations.

German is studied also in Year 3 and 4. This language was chosen because it is from the Germanic language family and has close links with the English language, providing opportunities for further study of etymology. German is a frequently studied foreign language with a wide range of available teaching resources.

Spanish is studied in Year 5 and 6. This ensures that pupils develop a basic foundation in Spanish, preparing them for further study of the language should they go on to study it at Key Stage 3. Spanish is taught in several local secondary schools. It is also considered accessible because of its relatively regular phonics, and there is a wide range of teaching resources available to support its teaching.

Russian is also taught in Year 5 and 6. This language is studied in greater depth than the other languages. The school employs a Russian-speaking teaching assistant with a Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language qualification, who delivers Russian lessons with the support of qualified teachers. Russian has been chosen because it provides children with the opportunity to study a language using a different alphabet. This enables us to build on the knowledge that some of our pupils already have about the Russian language, culture and traditions.

Cross-curricular links also include:

- Music: Rhyming, rhythm, singing, composition and world music.
- RE: Celebration of festivals, storytelling, calendars, customs, and international and multicultural work.

- History: Study of the history of other countries.
- Art: Colours, artists from around the world and descriptions of paintings.
- PE: Physical responses to teachers' instructions issued in the language being learnt.

4. Equal opportunities

Learning in MFL is differentiated to support children with SEND and those who are new to English. A range of strategies is used to support pupils, including:

- Setting common tasks which are open-ended and can have a variety of responses.
- Providing speaking and writing frames to scaffold responses.
- Using a range of questioning.
- Providing visual symbols to support understanding.
- Providing small-group or one-to-one support where needed.

At Firs Primary School, we are committed to promoting equal opportunities irrespective of socio-economic background, gender, disability or ethnicity in all areas of the curriculum. We believe that all children should have access to and participate in the learning of languages and should be supported in this process.

We teach a modern foreign language to all children, whatever their ability. MFL forms part of the school's commitment to providing a broad and balanced education for all children. Through our modern foreign language teaching, we provide learning opportunities that enable all children to make progress. We do this by setting suitable learning challenges and responding to each child's individual needs.

5. Assessment and Recording of Work

Children are assessed by the teacher and carry out self-assessment to reflect on and monitor the progress they are making in the language. This is done informally during lessons and is used to inform future planning.

We assess:

- Listening
- Speaking
- Talking to somebody
- Reading
- Writing
- Intercultural understanding

Children are assessed on an ongoing basis by the class teacher. At the end of each term, teachers assess children against the Programme of Study (PoS) in order to inform future planning. Progress is reported to parents on an annual basis as part of the end-of-year report.

A variety of methods are used to record work in MFL, including writing, pictures, structured worksheets, photographs, school displays and video recordings. Work may be recorded in individual topic books or in whole-class topic books. In Russian teaching in Year 5 and 6, children record their work in a Russian jotter. However, MFL lessons are often largely oral and therefore may not always be recorded in writing.

6. Monitoring and Review

The monitoring of the standards of children's work and the quality of teaching in MFL is the responsibility of the MFL Subject Leader.

The role of the Subject Leader also involves supporting colleagues in the teaching of MFL, keeping informed about current developments in the subject, and providing strategic leadership and direction for the subject across the school.

The MFL Subject Leader contributes towards a curriculum action plan in which they evaluate the strengths and areas for development within the subject and identify priorities for further improvement.

7. Continuing Professional Development

Training will be arranged as and when deemed necessary by the MFL Coordinator in response to subject monitoring and identified development needs.

In addition to training from external providers, CPD may include:

- Signposting to online resources to support subject knowledge.
- Modelling lessons.
- One-to-one staff coaching.

Teacher subject knowledge is also supported by the Early Start Languages programmes for Spanish and German, which provide native-speaker modelling of the vocabulary to be taught, as well as detailed lesson planning and vocabulary lists.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the MFL Subject Leader and updated as necessary to reflect developments in the subject and the school's provision.