

French A Level Student Handbook 2020



Why a language?

If you are looking for a future using communication skills, interpersonal skills, problem solving, team working, organisational skills and independence as well as excellent job prospects, then a modern language is for you. Languages are a personal skill and as such are an enriching experience with plenty of added value. We live in an increasingly global world where the ability to be able to speak another language is increasingly important.

Language study contributes to a broad general education and gives you invaluable practical and transferable skills for the future. In most careers nowadays language abilities are highly valued. You may choose to specialise in French/German at university or combine your language with other subjects such as Engineering, History, Media and journalism, Management and Business Studies, Teaching, Fashion Design, Travel & Hospitality Management, Accountancy, European Studies, or International or European Law.

What will I be doing during the course?

You will learn not just to speak or write about various subjects, but more importantly, to express an opinion about them.

The topics studied for the Year 12 course include the family and relationships, the digital world, charity work, Francophone heritage, music and cinema.

The topics for the Year 13 course deal with immigration, integration, racism, those marginalised in society, crime, politics, demonstrations and strikes.

You will be working on tasks set by the teacher but also on more independent activities depending on what your interests or needs are.

You will have the opportunity to complete Work Experience in France.

Is it like GCSE?

No! Not really. You will be in a small class and will focus on topics which are important in today's world and to people of your age. Family, relationships, cinema are examples. The main similarity is that opinions and justifications are still key. You won't however be learning the answers to set questions - instead you will need to be independent and able to manipulate the language to suit what you want to say. Your increasingly in-depth knowledge of grammar will enable you to do this.

There is a big jump from GCSE to AS level but you will be well supported with the transition and your teacher will ensure that you have a good grounding before taking you on to more complex language.

Expectations

- We expect you to have a good GCSE grade preferably 6 or above.
- You will need to be prepared to work independently, finding information and reading and listening to French on your own.
- You will need to be prepared to have a go at speaking in class. Classes are small and everyone finds this difficult at first but practising speaking and giving opinions will be essential to your success.
- You will need to take an interest in the culture of France/Francophone countries.
- You will need to keep your work organised and keep your own notes, including noting down & learning vocabulary regularly using a separate vocabulary book.

Year 12

The Year 12 course is made up of three units, which are assessed internally at the end of the Year. Paper 1 is the Listening, Reading and Writing Paper. This lasts 1 hour 45 minutes and represents 45% of the AS grade. Exams will be internal. The main difference from GCSE is that you will listen on a laptop and have individual control during the listening exam.

Paper 2 is the Writing exam. This lasts 1 hour 30 minutes and represents 25% of the AS grade. You will translate into French and write an essay about the literature we have studied.

Paper 3 is the Speaking exam. This lasts 12-14 minutes and represents 30% of the AS grade. You will talk about 2 sub-themes which will be the topics of two stimulus cards. You will have 15 minutes before the test to study the cards and make notes.

The Year 13 course

The Year 13 course is also made up of three units.

Paper 1 is the Listening, Reading and Writing Paper. This lasts 2 hours 30 minutes and represents 50% of the A2 grade. Exams will be external. Listening and responding in French, reading and responding to texts and translations into both French and English.

Paper 2 is the Writing exam. This lasts 2 hours and represents 20% of the grade. You will write an essay about the literature we have studied and a second essay about the film – each will have a choice of two titles.

Paper 3 is the Speaking exam. This lasts 21-23 minutes and represents 30% of the overall grade. You will talk about 1 sub-theme which will come from a choice of two stimulus cards. You will have 5 minutes before the test to study the cards and make notes. The second part of this exam will be a presentation and discussion of your Independent Research Project.

A Level Assessments

Paper 1: Listening, reading and writing

What's assessed

- Aspects of French-speaking society: current trends
- Aspects of French-speaking society: current issues
- Artistic culture in the French-speaking world
- Aspects of political life in the French-speaking world
- Grammar

How it's assessed

- Written exam: 2 hours 30 minutes
- 100 marks
- 50% of A-level

Questions

- Listening and responding to spoken passages from a range of contexts and sources covering different registers and adapted as necessary. Material will include complex factual and abstract content and questions will target main points, gist and detail. Studio recordings will be used and students will have individual control of the recording.

All questions are in French, to be answered with non-verbal responses or in French (30 marks)

- Reading and responding to a variety of texts written for different purposes, drawn from a range of authentic sources and adapted as necessary. Material will include complex factual and abstract content and questions will target main points, gist and detail.

All questions are in French, to be answered with non-verbal responses or in French (50 marks)

- Translation into English; a passage of minimum 100 words (10 marks)
- Translation into French; a passage of minimum 100 words (10 marks).

No access to a dictionary during the assessment.

Paper 2: Writing

What's assessed

- One text and one film or two texts from the list set in the specification
- Grammar

How it's assessed

- Written exam: 2 hours
- 80 marks in total
- 20% of A-level

Questions

- **Either** one question in French on a set text from a choice of two questions and one question in French on a set film from a choice of two questions **or** two questions in French on set texts from a choice of two questions on each text.
- All questions will require a critical appreciation of the concepts and issues covered in the work and a critical and analytical response to features such as the form and the technique of presentation, as appropriate to the work studied (eg the effect of narrative voice in a prose text or camera work in a film).

No access to texts or films during the assessment.

No access to a dictionary during the assessment.

Students are advised to write approximately 300 words per essay.

Paper 3: Speaking

What's assessed

- Individual research project
- One of four themes (Aspects of French-speaking society: current trends, Aspects of French-speaking society: current issues, Artistic culture in the French-speaking world, Aspects of political life in the French-speaking world)

How it's assessed

- Oral exam: 21–23 minutes (including 5 minutes preparation time)
- 60 marks in total
- 30% of A-level

Questions

- Discussion of a sub-theme with the discussion based on a stimulus card (5–6 minutes). The student studies the card for 5 minutes at the start of the test (25 marks).
- Presentation (2 minutes) and discussion (9–10 minutes) of individual research project (35 marks).

No access to a dictionary during the assessment (including 5 minutes preparation).

Students may take the assessment only once before certification.

Assessments will be conducted by either the centre or a visiting examiner and marked by an AQA examiner.

Teaching

The A level course will be split between two teachers.

Year 12

In year 12 each teacher will concentrate on different topics and then one teacher will work on the literature (No et moi) while the other focusses on the speaking element of your exam. You will cover the grammar learned at GCSE in more depth and more complex grammar will be added. It is essential that you have a sound grasp of grammar and are able to apply the rules in all contexts. You will be given homework tasks and expected to undertake practice in your own time.

Your speaking teacher will conduct your oral exam which will be marked internally.

You will be set a variety of homework tasks: listening, reading, writing and grammar exercises. You will also need to learn 30 words a week of your choice and will have a weekly vocabulary test and the results recorded. You will need an account on Quizlet to help with this.

You will take a fantastic French film home to watch and review in addition every cycle or every four weeks.

Independent learning is the key to success in a language. You need to read and listen to French on your own and look up vocabulary. Just completing homework tasks will not be enough to get a really good grade. Your teacher will give you a sheet to help you record what you have done and will review it with you. Look at the resources list at the end for some ideas of what you could do. You can do extra verb practice, read the news or listen to French music – as long as it's in French, it doesn't have to be closely related to what you're doing in lessons unless you feel you need extra practice on that.

Year 13

Year 13 works in a similar way to year 12 although there is only a small amount of grammar to add at A2 so we have few explicit grammar lessons at this stage, although you may have lessons to revise what was covered at AS if necessary. You will have one teacher who is responsible for the speaking who will prepare you for your oral exam.

The other teacher will focus on the film element of the course (La Haine/Au Revoir les enfants).

Organisation

A well organised file is the key to success at A Level. If you keep to these guidelines you will have no difficulty in keeping yourself prepared for lessons and keeping up with what is expected of you.

Please label your file dividers as follows:

1. General Information

Year 1

2. La famille en voie de changement
3. La cyber-société
4. Le rôle du bénévolat
5. Une culture fière de son patrimoine
6. La musique francophone contemporaine
7. Le septième art
8. Littérature – No et moi
9. Grammar
10. Speaking

Year 2

11. Les aspects positifs d'une société diverse
12. Quelle vie pour les marginalisés?
13. Comment on traite les criminels
14. Les ados, le droit de vote et l'engagement politique
15. Manifestations, grèves – a qui le pouvoir?
16. La politique et l'immigration
17. Film – La Haine/Au Revoir les enfants
18. Grammar
19. Speaking
20. Useful websites
21. IRP work

- When you are given handouts, please ensure that they are filed in the appropriate section of your folder. **If you miss a lesson for any reason, it is your responsibility to get a copy of anything handed out.**
- It is essential that you bring your file to every lesson.

It is your responsibility take good care of the textbooks you are given. They must be returned to school at the end of the course in the *same state* that they were given to you.

- ✓ You will have a speaking lesson once a cycle. This is a compulsory lesson and if you know that you are going to be away you must inform your teacher, just as you would inform your class teacher. All prep for that lesson is compulsory too.
- ✓ Use your private study time to develop your independent study skills (not just to complete homework!). Use online resources Quizlet for vocabulary learning, languagesonline.org for revision of tenses, slowfrench.com for listening and keep a list of additional websites that you are given or find.

Languages are a highly regarded and notoriously difficult subject but they offer you a wealth of cultural knowledge, transferable skills as well as increasing future opportunities, even if you don't choose to study them further. As a challenging subject, you need to keep the following tips in mind:

1. Be organised – lessons are fast and packed with content. You need to be able to pick up your learning from your organised notes outside the classroom.
2. Positive attitude – languages are hard but you'll find it's a bit like interval training; there are some steep learning curves but you'll see progress after them. Keeping positive will ensure you get to the end in one piece!
3. Independent study – you must regularly review your work (this booklet has some tips on how) and test your knowledge. There are so many different skills to learn a language that just doing past papers isn't enough. Not doing any work in between lessons will show and hinder your progress.
4. Reflect on your progress – analyse past papers/assessments plus the feedback from your teachers to identify areas to work on. Complete proactive tasks to help you make progress.

Mindset

Achieving the best grade is more than learning the specification. To truly excel in languages, you have to develop the key skills and the right mindset. There are often leaps between the key stages, particularly between GCSE and A Level. There is also a gap between skills for most people: listening is always deemed one of the most difficult skills along with translation whereas a lot of people find reading harder. A language isn't one skill: it's all of them together and while some students seem to just "get it", they'll probably really struggle further down the line. Studies show that students who achieve most highly are those who work the hardest, have honed their learning skills and reflect on their progress regularly.

A growth mindset appreciates that you can improve your ability and performance. Time and research show that those students with a growth mindset regularly outperform their peers. Focus on yourself and your progress instead of how everyone else is doing.

Key resources

Various resources are essential for all A Level students, and your teacher will be able to help you choose one or may suggest you order one through the school. These include:

- A good dictionary.
- A good AS/A2 level vocab book e.g. Mot à mot or an organised Quizlet account if you prefer.
- A grammar reference & practice book e.g. the AQA A level and AS grammar and translation workbook that complements the AQA A level text books that we use
- A verb table book.

Resources for Independent Study

EXTRA GRAMMAR / STRUCTURES PRACTICE

- Languageonline is useful for basic grammar recap www.languageonline.org.uk
- Verbs online is a site where you can test yourself at verb forms <http://www.verbs-online.com/>
- Reverso is a great & easy to use dictionary (use the 'dictionary' tab, not the 'translation' one). The site also has a 'conjugation' tab where you can look up different tenses easily. <https://dictionary.reverso.net/english-french/>
- <https://conjugator.reverso.net/conjugation-french.html> is a useful site which helps with conjugating verbs
- <https://dailyfrenchpod.com/> - you'll need to skip the adverts but this site is good for listening and practising your pronunciation
- <https://radiolingua.com/> - another great site with graded listening activities and analysis of the language

TOPIC BASED / CURRENT AFFAIRS

It's vital as part of your studies to have an idea about current affairs in French speaking countries.

- TV5 Monde – A French TV channel that has lots of online resources. The 'apprendre' section works through improving your French <https://apprendre.tv5monde.com/fr/apprendre-francais/tester-son-niveau>, or you can watch current affairs videos <https://information.tv5monde.com/video/art-et-confinement-des-tableaux-vivants-fleurissent-sur-les-reseaux-sociaux> There are also lots of articles on the site
- For listening to French news, the sites <https://www.20minutes.fr/> and <https://www.francetvinfo.fr/en-direct/tv.html> have news articles and videos
- <https://www.institut-francais.org.uk/> is a useful site to explore with interesting articles on cinema, books and lots more.
- <https://www.newsinslowfrench.com/> - a fabulous site which you can sign up to for free for 7 days.
- <https://www.lawlessfrench.com/> is a useful site which gives information on French culture and grammar
- <https://www.lefigaro.fr/> <https://www.lemonde.fr/> and other French news websites are quite challenging as they are designed for native speakers, but worth a look every now & again
- <https://www.1jour1actu.com/> is designed for French children but has some useful articles on current affairs and some fairly challenging listening files.

Independent study activities – You should be aiming to complete one of these a week.

- Read an article from a French newspaper (see suggestions above), look up vocabulary you don't know, highlight different tenses/grammar points and explain what they are. Try to summarise it in your own words, as this is something you will have to do at A Level.
- Prepare a presentation in French on something to do with France. It could be an aspect of history, food, art, music, sport. If you can, record yourself speaking and add it to the presentation (this is very easy on Powerpoint).
- Watch a video, making a note of the vocabulary you hear and try to summarise what you've heard – the more exposure you can get to real French people speaking the better!
- Work on a grammar point that you know you struggle with.
<https://languagesonline.org.uk/Hotpotatoes/frenchindex.html#Grammar> is a good place to start, please email us if there is a point in particular you'd like help with.
- Record yourself talking for one minute about a topic of your choice, e.g. a past holiday, a film, current affairs, sport etc.

OTHER

- You will be expected to attend individual speaking lessons with other adults – we will timetable these for you and they will be compulsory.
- TV Some TV providers allow you to access foreign language TV programmes – see if yours does & start watching French TV e.g. soaps (use google to find out what's popular). Try watching a series with the language and subtitles set to French (this is easier when you have watched the series so know the storyline!).
- Reading Free e-books available on <https://e-livre.sncf.com/> . There are lots of French magazines and books etc. on <https://www.culturetheque.com/EXPLOITATION/GBR/accueil-portal.aspx> and <https://www.institut-francais.org.uk/la-mediatheque/>
Parallel texts – You can buy books that have French on one side & English on the other to give you a gentle introduction to reading novels in another language.
There are a selection of books in the department at school that you can borrow from us as long as you sign them out & bring them back – there are also some in the school library & in town libraries about France and French history.
- Film recommendations: <https://www.ila-france.com/blog/top-french-films-every-french-language-student-should-watch>
- Music – Use the internet to research French bands & download some you like. Google the texts and listen to them, trying to work out the meanings.
- Your own interests – Follow aspects of life that you enjoy e.g. sport / fashion / music / art / politics in France e.g. via the internet or news sites.

There are lots more you can add to the list and we update our website list all the time.
As you come up with your own ideas or discover good sites, make a note of them below (and don't forget to tell us so we can put it on the list for next year's class).

