

EDUCATION EVOLVED

French

Is there a big gap between GCSE and A level?

There is a gap between GCSE and A level. Looking at it positively, this means that your level of proficiency in the language will be much higher when you finish your A level course of study. Your teachers are experts in their fields and are aware of this. They will help you make the transition from GCSE to A level very slowly with a great deal of support. Many of the topic areas that we cover in the first year build on what you have learnt at GCSE. Your teacher will start from what you have learnt during your GCSE course and build on it, helping you to gradually bridge the gap to A level.

Does the course contain coursework?

The French A level does not contain a coursework component. The students will sit for three exams at the end of the two-year course of study. The first exam is a listening/reading/translation paper which is similar in layout to what you have already done at GCSE, the second paper is a writing paper and the third paper is a speaking exam.

What sort of topics do we study at A level?

In the first year the topics discussed are related to social issues like: the family and cyber society. In the second year we explore topics of a more political nature – topics such as migration and racism. Alongside these topics we also cover 2 main cultural topics – a film and piece of literature. In French in December of the first year of study we start with the film `La Haine`. In the second year we study the novel: No et moi by Delphine de Vigan.

Are there any trips and exchanges organised?

Fostering a love of language and culture lies at the heart of the MFL curriculum and at St. Brendan's we believe that there is no better way of doing this than for our language A level students to experience this first hand. International Exchange is integral to our Enrichment programme and the MFL Department works very hard to ensure that our students benefit from a wide range of intercultural activities during their course of study. Our French A level students visited Paris in the second week of February this year. During their stay, they visited iconic landmarks in this beautiful city.

What other activities and events would MFL A level students be able to involve themselves in?

A very varied enrichment programme is an integral part of the Languages' Curriculum here at St. Brendan's. We are passionate about giving our students the chance to enrich their learning and enhance their cultural understanding. We organise a number of cultural and social activities with the aim of promoting languages throughout the College. To this end activities like our Languages Carousel and our Christmas Quiz are now set items in our enrichment calendar.

Masterclasses and talks by invited guest speakers are another feature of our enrichment programme. Passing on the love for other languages and cultures is a central part of the mission of our Language Centre. With the invaluable help of our language students we run a series of speaking practice workshops for GCSE language students in neighbouring secondary schools.

St Brendan's Language Centre enjoys valuable links with the University of Bath and the University of Bristol. For the past five years our Language Centre has worked very closely with the school of Modern Languages at the University of Bristol to run a mentoring programme for our students by PGCE language students from Bristol University.

The Access to Bristol Modern Languages Programme and the On Track to Bath Programme are both very popular amongst our Languages students. Through participation in these programmes our students get an idea of what it is like to study at these Universities, they get to work with academics and current students who can offer advice and guidance about higher education and their subject area.

What choice of subjects do languages go best with?

A language A level complements any choice of A level subjects and gives the A level programme that additional dimension which has the potential to widen the students' future options and choices in that it equips our students with invaluable transferable skills. The ability to communicate in another language develops a number of competencies, skills and attitudes which are critical for our students' success at university and beyond. A level language students will develop their critical thinking, their ability to compare and contrast, they will practice gathering, analysing and assessing information and improve their observational skills. They will also become more aware of their own language and this will help them to become more effective communicators. Language learners are flexible, take risks and are willing to overcome obstacles. All of these skills are highly rated by lecturers and employers.

Where does an A level in a language lead to?

Attainment in Languages at St. Brendan's is very high. On average 75% of our language students go on to study at some of the best universities in the country. Some of them choose to continue with the study of the language, others combine the language with a wide variety of subjects ranging from law to business and international relations. Students who choose to go down a scientific route when at university usually tend to spend a year working in the country whose language they can speak when undertaking their degree. This widens their employment experience and gives them the extra edge when looking at employment options after finishing their degree.