



The Dixie Grammar School

Nursery • Junior • Senior

A decade of educational excellence and academic ambition

Frequently Asked Questions

We aspire to be a listening organisation. These are some of the questions that have been asked by visitors and current parents this last half term – we are happy to provide answers.

- [1. Why do you teach Mandarin and not Latin?](#)
- [2. Why is the Dixie inspected by ISI and not Ofsted?](#)
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1. Why do you teach Mandarin and not Latin?

In an ever-evolving global landscape, the choices we make in education profoundly shape our children's futures. While classical languages resonate with history, our gaze at the Dixie Grammar School is firmly fixed on the horizon. This is why we moved from the teaching of Latin, to include the study of Mandarin Chinese twenty years ago, as a truly progressive choice for your child. We are the only school in the wider area to offer Mandarin in the curriculum from Year 5 to Sixth Form and have done so for many years.

Mandarin is not merely a language; it is a gateway to a global superpower, a key to understanding a culture of immense historical depth and contemporary dynamism. In a world increasingly interconnected with China's economy, innovation, and influence, fluency in Mandarin offers unparalleled opportunities in fields ranging from business and technology to international relations and the arts.

The study of Mandarin is an investment in your child's future relevance. It fosters cognitive agility, enhances problem-solving skills, and cultivates a global mindset essential for navigating the complexities of the 21st century. While Latin offers insights into the roots of Western languages, Mandarin equips our students with a practical, powerful tool for engaging with the world as it is and as it will be.

Richard Thirlwell is delighted to lead a Modern Languages Department which provides all students teaching in three distinct languages: the Romance character of French stands apart from the logic and grammar of German and Mandarin script appeals in a completely different way. Seeing Year 7 pupils' books full of Mandarin Hanzi still inspires awe and wonder and he remembers the incredible impact of our Head Boy conversing fluently in Mandarin with the Chinese delegates who came to award the school its Confucius Classroom status. Fast forward to this year, and our Year 11 Mandarin students are often heard chatting in Chinese to our Mandarin teachers and assistant.

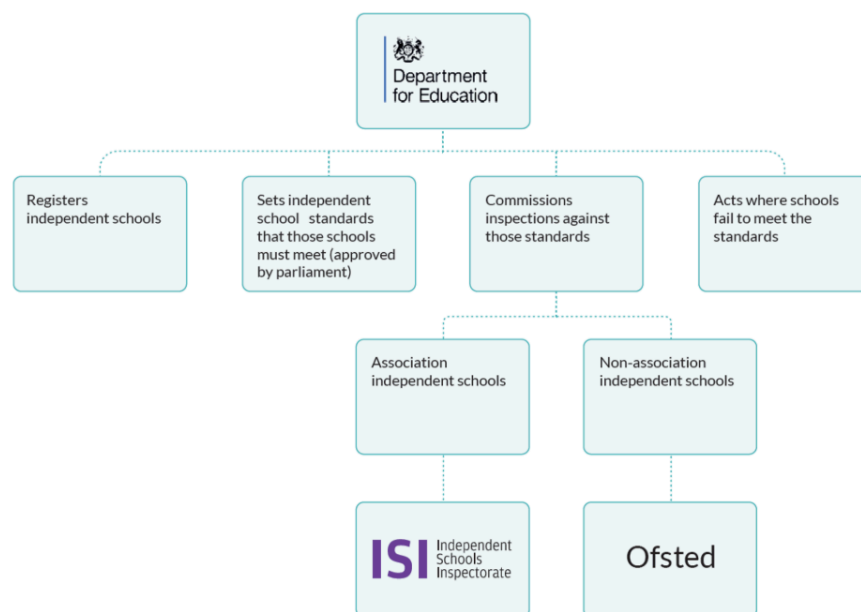
At Dixie Grammar, we look forward, not back; we are progressive and are committed to providing an education that is not only rigorous but also relevant. By embracing Mandarin, we are not turning our backs

on the past, but rather equipping our students with the linguistic and cultural fluency to confidently stride into a future brimming with possibilities.

2. Why is the Dixie inspected by ISI and not Ofsted?

Independent schools affiliated to an association are inspected by ISI – the remainder by Ofsted. The standards inspected are the same, but Ofsted inspections are different in focus – the vast majority of Ofsted inspections cover the state sector.

ISI inspections are searching, rigorous and the vast majority of independent schools welcome comparison with other independent educational establishments.



3. How are subject options made in the Senior School?

Our full options programme [can be found here](#) on our website. All subject choices are made in collaboration with pupils and parents. We communicate with parents before option choices are made and then with parents again, once subjects are finalised.

4. How do language options work in the Senior School?

Languages from Y6 to A level

We are delighted to offer an introduction to three very different styles of foreign language at the Dixie.

All pupils in Year 6 typically have lessons in French, German and Mandarin. Prior knowledge is not assumed and there is a focus on how to learn vocabulary and grammar as well as on cultural aspects of each of these countries. This is important so as to enthuse pupils for foreign languages rather than overwhelm them. This pattern continues into Year 7, albeit with a greater focus on language skills.

In Year 8 there are six periods available for the teaching of foreign Languages and I am pleased that we are able to tailor this time to best suit the strengths and needs of each child. Some children will do best with three periods of French and three of German. Others will continue to thrive in French, German and Mandarin with two periods of each per week. Teachers know pupils well and this knowledge informs these decisions, which are taken at the end of Year 7, with parents and pupils also part of the process.

At the end of Year 8, pupils are asked to make a number of decisions regarding the subjects they wish to study into Year 9. For languages, this means deciding whether to continue with two languages or specialise in just one. Communication about this process is sent home, pupils complete an online form and, as always, teachers, pupils and parents have a role to play in such decisions.

Languages form part of the core curriculum at the Dixie and so all pupils will normally study at least one language at GCSE with a number each year choosing to continue with two. There is usually continuity of teachers between GCSE and Sixth Form, where we are delighted to be able to offer all three languages at A level or equivalent.