



Feedback from the Primary languages forum March 9th 2015

Following various comments from parents over the past 12 months regarding the teaching of languages at BISB, we held an open forum in early March in order to present to parents our philosophy, in that regard, as well as to clarify certain misconceptions that had been circulating about how we approach languages.

In order to spread our findings as widely as possible we would like to make available my presentation to all parents who might be interested. As such you will find both the text of my presentation as well as the PowerPoint that I showed that evening in the same place as this letter.

However, let me outline in brief the outcome of the discussions that resulted from both the forum and subsequent discussions amongst the faculty. The rationale behind the presentation was primarily to explain to parents the different approaches to language-learning that are possible in the school environment, and to place BISB's offerings in that context. As you will see from the presentation, amongst the possibilities for language exposure (**immersion, competency or sensitization programmes**), BISB hovers between the sensitization and competency models for both French and Spanish. One of the options that became apparent as a result of my research and discussions with staff was the possibility of veering further towards a competency model for ONE language (to be chosen as an option of either French or Spanish by all pupils from Nursery to Y6). As I made clear in my presentation, it should be understood that we do **not** offer a language immersion programme at BISB, and this has been the source of some of the misconceptions that led to miss-aligned expectations lower down the school.

There was also some discussion of broadening our language offerings further up the school, with the possible introduction of Mandarin, Japanese or German.

Ultimately, as much of the research concludes, there is no right or wrong way of exposing pupils to languages in schools, though what is clear is that early exposure to *some* language in combination with **consistency** and **continuity** through middle and high school is a recipe for successful outcomes. We believe that this is exactly what we currently offer at BISB. We are unique in the community in offering a **sensitization** model in two languages at primary level, and whilst there remains an argument for moving to exposure to a single language (option) in the primary school, which may or may not be better, we have decided for the foreseeable future to remain with our tried and tested model.

This impacts the practicality of introducing a third language option at Y7 for 2015-16, and so we will remain with our current model in the middle and high school also, though we remain open and determined to broaden our language options as the school grows. We will reassess the option of Mandarin especially for the year 2016-17.

I would like to thank parents and faculty who have contributed to the discussion, and remain as ever at your disposal to discuss these matters at any time. We will continue to seek the best ways to exposure your children to language opportunities and will review our options year by year.

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