

Modern foreign Languages

in the French school system



- From 6 to 18 years old, compulsory classes
- The first modern foreign language begins at primary, the second in lower secondary (collège) and the third in upper secondary (lycée)
- At the baccalauréat, 56 languages (45 foreign languages and 11 regional languages) can be assessed

Languages for all pupils from 6 to 18 years old

The objective shared by France and the European Union is to give each citizen the means to express themselves in and to understand a minimum of two foreign languages

The teaching of modern languages is **compulsory for all pupils from primary school to the baccalaureate**. Proficiency in languages is one of the seven key competences of the '*Socle Commun de Connaissances et de Compétences*' (The Common Core of Knowledge and Skills) that all pupils must have acquired by the end of compulsory schooling at the age of 16.

The syllabus draws on the '*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*' (CEFR). The levels to be reached are as follows: A1 for 10-11 year-olds, A2 for 14-15 year-olds, B1 at age 16 and B2 at age 18.

More than fifteen foreign languages are taught in lower secondary including German, English, Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Dutch, Portuguese and Russian.

Specific routes

Varied and modular courses are on offer for pupils to boost and deepen the learning of languages and cultures. They have their own assessments:

Sections internationales (International Sections)

International sections have taken **French and foreign pupils** in primary, lower secondary and general upper secondary since 1981. They exist for the following languages: German, American English, British English, Arabic, Chinese, Danish, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Dutch, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian and Swedish.

Foreign teachers - often seconded by their State of origin - teach specific courses in their own language, primarily the history, geography and literature of the concerned country but also maths, based on syllabuses drawn up in consultation with the educational authorities of the country.

Sections binationales (Bi-national Sections)

Their purpose is the **simultaneous award of two end-of-secondary diplomas**: The ABIBAC (French Baccalauréat and German "*Abitur*"), the BACHIBAC (French Baccalauréat and Spanish "*Bachiller*") and the ESABAC (French Baccalauréat and Italian "*Esame di Stato*"). In these sections pupils follow a specific course developed jointly with one of these three partners. This dual award gives identical access to higher education in both countries.

Sections européennes (European Sections) or Sections de langues orientales (Oriental Languages Sections).

Sections européennes and *sections de langues orientales* are **intensive courses** in a modern foreign language and the culture of a country offered to willing pupils at lower secondary school and including, from the age of 16, **a general, technological or vocational discipline in a foreign language.**

Sections européennes are available in 7 languages.

Sections de langues orientales exist in Arabic, Chinese, Japanese and Vietnamese.

Enseignements de langue et de culture d'origine (Heritage Languages and Cultures)

The *heritage languages and cultures* are taught between the ages of 6 and 18 for three hours a week prioritising pupils whose families are immigrants or of immigrant origin and who make the request. These classes are taught by Algerian, Croatian, Spanish, Italian, Moroccan, Portuguese, Serbian, Tunisian or Turkish teachers seconded by their respective governments.

At the start of the 2011 academic year

for pupils:

- classes organised by **skills sets with modular timetables** allowing periods of intensive learning,
- subjects taught in a modern foreign language,
- **a choice of foreign and regional languages** offered from primary school, 33 languages taught at lower and upper secondary. A total of **56 languages can be assessed** for the general and technological baccalaureate,
- **free English courses** during the holidays for all willing upper secondary school pupils,
- a literary series, with a focus on international issues and languages, offering **new teaching in foreign literature in a foreign language** and the opportunity to choose an in-depth course in **a third modern language**,
- the **reinforced use of educational ICT** as part of teaching, in order to diversify and optimise exposure to the selected language [digital work environment, mobile digital devices etc),
- **a second compulsory modern language for all vocational baccalaureates** in the service sector (hotels, catering),
- **increased mobility** for learning purposes.

for teachers:

- **compulsory acquisition** - in initial training - of **level B2 of the CEFR** in a foreign language for all primary and secondary school teachers of all disciplines.

for schools, as part of an updated regulatory framework:

- **European and/or international partnerships in each school** allowing actual or virtual exchanges to take place.

A strategic committee for languages:

Its mission is to reflect **on the teaching of languages from nursery to the baccalaureate**. Early exposure to languages (and particularly English) from a very young age, oral skills, the role of digital resources or indeed **mobility, in Europe and worldwide**, pupils and teachers are at the heart of its reflections. Furthermore, French experts are participating in many **working groups** and think tanks at **European level**.

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