

The German Department at Reigate Grammar School

The following guide is intended as a reference document. It does not claim to be exhaustive, but does give an insight into the running and practices of the German department.

Approach

Firstly, a teaching style will inevitably depend on the teacher's personal strengths and the character of the class to be taught. Secondly, it is in many ways also determined by the style of examination we are preparing pupils for. Generally speaking, different classes will respond to different approaches, and we should aim to include strategies that work well in the classroom and contribute positively to learning and motivation. In addition, we aim to enable our pupils to communicate effectively in German and to inspire a lively interest in the people and culture of the German-speaking world.

Staff

The department currently consists of two full-time members of staff, namely Mr David Jones and Ms Martina Sowa, who is also the Head of Department since September 2006. In addition, we are supported each year by a native speaker assistant, whose main responsibility lies in assisting to prepare the students for the oral elements of public examinations. The German language assistants have proven to be invaluable resources and the Department continues to use them as fully and as effectively as possible.

Performance Management

The performance management of the teachers in the German department will be formally conducted once a year. This will include one formal lesson observation, a check of the teacher's mark book and a random selection of exercise books. A formal meeting will take place beforehand to discuss this review, and also afterwards to agree targets and/or career development. The Head of German keeps a record of the Performance Management review and the teacher reviewed also receives a copy.

German within the Curriculum

German is offered as a First Foreign Language and as a Second Foreign Language within the Curriculum. Over the past few years, the majority of pupils have opted to learn German as a Second Foreign Language in the Second Form. The uptake of German in the Second Form has been healthy over the last few years and currently numbers at GCSE and A Level are respectable.

Overview of the German Curriculum

- **Second Form:** Pupils study a curriculum based on LOGO 1.
- **Third Form:** A scheme of work is followed based on LOGO 2.

GCSE German (until Summer 2010)

- **Fourth Form:** Students begin their two-year preparation to AQA GCSE with LOGO 4 Rot (chapters 1-6). Group work with the German assistant will take place on a weekly basis to improve students' pronunciation and will give them a chance to practise their oral skills.

- **Fifth Form:** Students continue with LOGO 4 Rot (chapters 7-10) and visit the assistant once a week for oral practice. A GCSE mock examination takes place at the beginning of January. The GCSE oral examinations will be conducted at the end of April or the beginning of May according to the timetable outlined by AQA.

New GCSE German (from September 2009)

- **Fourth Form:** Students begin their two-year preparation to AQA GCSE with ECHO (chapters 1-6). Group work with the German assistant will take place on a weekly basis to improve students' pronunciation and will give them a chance to practise their oral skills.
- **Fifth Form:** Students continue with ECHO (chapters 6-9) and visit the assistant once a week for oral practice. A GCSE mock examination takes place at the beginning of January, where students will sit their first written Controlled Assessment. The second written Controlled Assessment will be performed at the end of April or the beginning of May and the oral examinations will be conducted in May according to the time table outlined by AQA.
- **Sixth and Seventh Form:** Students study for their two-year A Level German course following the AQA scheme of work. Assistant lessons are weekly, either individually or in small groups. In the Summer Term of their first year of study, students will sit an internal examination. In January of their second year of study, students will sit Units One and Two of the public exams, and subsequently Units Three and Four in the Summer Term of year two of their A Level course. There is also the possibility of resisting Units One and Two at that time if necessary.

Broad Aims

Our aims are as follows:

- To encourage and support all pupils in their study of German.
- To raise the profile of German.
- To review and update schemes of work and teaching resources on an on-going basis.
- To continue to develop a bank of shared resources for each year group.
- To review and increase the use of ICT where appropriate.
- To ensure differentiated teach of German at GCSE, so that the most able are challenged sufficiently and encouraged to achieve A* grades, and the less able are given more structured support and encouragement to aim for B and C grades.
- To encourage German Sixth Form linguists to work and research more independently in order to gain more cultural knowledge and a better appreciation of the German-speaking countries.

Year Group Responsibilities

In order to ensure the effective running of the Department, year group responsibilities have been assigned to each member of staff. This role consists in co-ordinating the progression within the teaching of German according to the scheme of work for each particular year group. Furthermore, the teacher in charge will organise the writing and marking of end-of-unit tests and contribute to the writing of end-of-year examinations.

Organisation

1. Resources

The department is well-equipped, with many resources available for students and staff either online or on the Shared Drive. Resources such as worksheets, flashcards, etc. produced by members of the department can be found in the French/German office or in room 23. ICT activities and the schemes of work can be found on the Shared Drive of the department. Past public exam papers and internal exams can be found in the two German filing cabinets in the French/German office. Information on grade boundaries can also be found in these filing cabinets.

2. Office space

All members of the department should have their own desk in the French/German office (room 20)

3. Meetings

The department holds regular meetings:

- As per time table, once a week.
- As an addendum to a full MFL meeting on INSET days.

The minutes of these meetings can be found in German Shared on the U-Drive.

Differentiation

Due to smaller numbers in comparison to the French and Spanish departments, German is taught in mixed ability groups in all years. Consequently, the German department fully endorses the MFL Differentiation policy. Please see the MFL Guide for full details.

Homework policy

Homework timetables are organised by Heads of Year at the beginning of the academic year. The amount of time allocated is increased from First to Fifth Form. Homework should arise naturally out of class work and should be varied. They involve learning, written work, reading, preparation or listening to language recordings and increasingly the online resources acquired and/or recommended by the department. Pupils not down homework set in their planners. They are expected to complete the work on time and to a satisfactory standard. This will be marked or tested at the earliest opportunity. Instances of unsatisfactory or no homework will be dealt with by the individual teacher but persistent offenders are to be referred to the Head of German, the Form Tutor and the Head of Year. Students whose work continues to be unsatisfactory over a longer period of time and despite the teacher's suggestions and encouragement towards improvement may be placed on a general Special Report or a Special Subject Report. These have to be signed by parents and staff.

Marking

Work should be collected in on a regular basis and marked at least once every three weeks. The aim is to assist and encourage each student to make progress and to understand the standard at which he or she is working.

A mixture of German and English comments seems most effective, that is to say target language comments within the range of the student's understanding should be used, though explanations and advice can be written in English where appropriate. The

“sandwich approach” to feedback seems to be particularly useful and encouraging to the majority of students, i.e. starting off with a positive comment, followed by a target/suggestion for improvement, and then finishing off with another positive point. The use of stickers, stamps and commendations as part of a reward system seems to be very motivating in the Lower School, too.

There is a common effort and/or achievement assessment each half-term in the school assessment programme. These include all four skills in Modern Languages, with appropriate emphasis on class oral efforts.

In GCSE and A Level tests marking follows syllabus guidelines of the examination board.

Pupils should be encouraged to do corrections of errors to enable teachers to monitor progress. Teachers may also conduct re-tests, particularly of learning work. This is generally done during lunch-break, though after-school detentions can be given if a student continues to under-perform.

Mock GCSE examinations are held in January. Reading, Listening and Writing comprehension papers are marked by each teacher following the exam board’s mark. As the writing papers are marked by the teacher of each class, moderation by the Head of Department is common practice in order to ensure consistency. Each teacher examines their own pupils for the Oral examination.

As part of the new GCSE syllabus (first assessed in 2011), two written controlled assessments must be completed. One will take place during the mock examinations in January and the second one will take place around Easter time. Each class teacher will be responsible for marking these assessments according to the exam board’s mark scheme and guidelines and the Head of Department will moderate across the board as appropriate. The Oral examinations will have to be conducted and assessed by each class teacher, too. This will be done according to the criteria and guidelines stipulated by the exam board and moderation will be necessary.

For all years, a marking symbol index is available can be used. This seems generally helpful for Third to Seventh Form to identify the types of mistakes being made.

Records and reports

Reports are provided for parents according to the School's system. Each year group has a written report in each school year at differing times. In addition there is a system of computer-based half-termly grades that reflect both attitude and ability.

The School's reporting system comprises both summative and formative assessments following the guidelines established under the whole-school initiative entitled "Assessment for Learning" which was introduced in September 2004.

There is one parents' evening for each year group and other meetings at key stages in the pupils' academic careers to discuss academic progress, options and future possibilities

within the school.

A record of each pupil's examination achievements (internal and external) is kept centrally by the Head of German.

Assessment and self-assessment

In the Second Form, an end-of-unit test is conducted after each unit. The end-of-unit test assesses listening, reading and writing skills, and a speaking test should be performed additionally every other unit. The so-called "Kontrolle" and "Lernzieltest" should be used for this purpose and are part of the Logo 1 course. Teachers may wish to supplement these tests with additional tasks at their discretion. In the Third Form, an end-of unit test is conducted every two units. Again teachers may wish supplement the "Kontrolle" and "Lernzieltest" materials.

In the Fourth Form, a GCSE-style assessment is conducted once every two units. The materials for these tests should be taken from the assessments listed at the end of the "Echo" textbook. Inbetween those assessments, teachers frequently set a written or reading assessment as another means of testing the students progress.

In the Fifth Form, past GCSE papers are set on a regular basis, i.e. once half-termly, but as part of their homework, written and reading papers are also set in order to familiarise students with the layout of the GCSE exam and to give them the opportunity to practice exam technique.

In the Sixth Form, students produce a written essay or oral presentation per teacher once a week. This is marked either according to exam board criteria if appropriate or similar. Please note that especially in the transitional period from GCSE to AS Level, it might seem more appropriate for teachers to set up their own raw score mark scheme initially. At the end of the Lower Sixth year, students will sit an internal AS-style exam. In the Upper Sixth, students will sit a mock exam after the October half-term in preparation for the AS exams in January and after February half-term in preparation for the A2 exams. The German assistant, who works with the Sixth Formers on an individual basis, also provides further feedback on the students' oral progress.

Our assessment policy for each year group is discussed and reviewed regularly in departmental meetings and changes to the above are made whenever the department feels this is necessary.

Self-assessment

A formal self-assessment takes place as decided by the department; we aim to do so once a year with each class. Formal self-assessment forms can be found on Languages shared. Even more regularly, we use other informal forms of self-assessments; an example for this is the "Lernziel" tick sheet as used with the Second Form. Other ways of more regular informal self-assessments include students identifying reoccurring errors themselves, after reviewing marked work and reading the teacher's comments.

Remote learning

The department subscribes to www.klar.co.uk for use with the Second to Fifth Form. It covers all topics and contains many interactive tasks that encourage the practice of all four skills as well as vocabulary learning and grammar consolidation. The Sixth and Seventh Form use www.kerboodle.com regularly in lessons and as part of their independent study. These websites can be accessed from home and will enable students to complete independent and remote learning in case the whole school is closed over a longer period of time. Teaching schedules and the topic lists at the beginning of each textbook enables the pupil to keep track of the order in which the topic units are studied.

The provision of ICT in the German Department

We use the following ICT resources on a regular basis: Logo Elektro 1 with the Second Form (i.e. Beginners); Logo Elektro 2 with the Third Form; www.languagesonline.org.uk with all years; www.linguascope.com with all years up to GCSE and www.klar.co.uk with all years up to (and including) GCSE; www.kerboodle.com with the Sixth and Seventh Form. Each class has the opportunity to visit the language laboratory once every two weeks on average in order to complete independent listening, speaking and grammar tasks by using the above resources.

In addition, the department is currently in the process of redesigning its website as a medium term project.

Public Examinations

Students are prepared for the following public examinations:

GCSE: AQA specifications (until summer 2010).

NEW GCSE: AQA specifications (from September 2009, first examination summer 2011).

A Level: New AQA specifications (first examinations in January & summer 2010). Our approach to the teaching of A Level German is linear. Consequently, Units 1 and 2 (i.e. the AS modules) will be completed in January of the Seventh Form. Units 3 and 4 will be completed in the summer of the Seventh Form.

Public Examination Results

Summer 2008

AS Level

no. of candidates	A	B
2	1	1

A Level

no. of candidates	A	B
2	1	1

GCSE

no. of candidates	A*	A	B	A*-B
6	2	3	1	100%

Summer 2009

AS Level: N/A: These are no longer taken in the summer but in January of the Upper Sixth Year. *A Level: N/A:* The Summer 2008 AS candidates did not continue to A Level.

GCSE

no. of candidates	A*	A	A*-A
5	3	2	100 %

Results and Pupil Numbers

Over the last two years, examination results at GCSE, AS and A Level have been very consistent, despite small classes that tend to be mixed in terms of ability.

In the current Fifth Form (2009-10), we have exceptional numbers with 25 candidates in total, taught in two mixed ability groups; the groups include an increased number of low-ability students, who could not choose another language as German became their sole foreign language at the end of the Second Form.

Due to the fact that German has effectively become a second foreign language in the Lower School over the last five years, our pupil numbers are respectable; the free choice between French, German or Spanish as a first foreign language in the First Form means that most pupils opt for either Spanish or French, and over the past three years we have had one beginners' class of about twenty pupils in the Second Form. Pupils can also drop a foreign language at the end of the Second Form, which has implications for the recruitment of German at GCSE, and even later at A Level.

The German department works hard to maintain numbers from the Second to the Third Form and to encourage the uptake at GCSE and A Level; however many outside factors influence pupil choices these days as well.

Despite minimal numbers at A Level, the School is very supportive to the department and is prepared to run the A Level German course. **The department is very grateful to receive the School's continued support in all German matters.**

German outside the classroom

All members of the department are encouraged to suggest ways in which German can be part of school life outside the immediate curriculum. The Junior Languages Club offers opportunities around the year to promote German culture and language. The department also endeavours to participate in special projects and display work around RGS, and examples are:

- Organising visits to see a German film or play.
- Students participating in workshops at the Goethe Institute in London.
- Showing DVDs of German films at RGS.
- Celebration of St. Nikolaus on 6th December.
- Email exchanges and/or projects with German schools.
- Study visits:

Apart from A Level and GCSE student conferences, the department aims to organise a 4-day study visit to Berlin every two to three years (usually during February or October Half Term) for all year groups combined.

- Languages Days:

A Second Form German Day is organised every year as part of the Summer Festival. On the First Form Languages Day, a fun introduction to German is also provided.

(Last updated: October 2009)

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