

Case Study – UK Schools Teaching Japanese



Impington Village College Cambridge



Key Facts about the School:

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Website: <http://www.impington.cambs.sch.uk/index.php>
Number of students: 1368 (2009-2010)
Age range: 11 - 18
Type of school: Foundation School
Specialisms: Languages and Applied learning

Brief description of the school:

Impington Village College is a 11-18 comprehensive school which became a Foundation School in September 2009. The school is located just north of Cambridge and accepts children from the local villages as well as some northern districts of Cambridge.

The college has a thriving international sixth form which offers the International Baccalaureate and A-Levels as well as a Performing Arts and specialist post 16 courses for students with learning difficulties. The sixth form accepts students from all over the UK and also has a large intake of European and other international students.

Japanese set up:

Number of Japanese language students: 32

Year Groups: Year 9 -13 However the GCSE course started in 2009-10, so there are not yet any year 11 students. The school also has a Japanese club for year 7-8 students who would like to study Japanese.

Japanese time-table:

Year Group	Study Hours per Week	Number of Students	Number of Groups
Year 9	1.5	6	1
Year 10	1.5	6	1
Year 11	-	-	-
Year 12	3.5	11	2
Year 13	3.5	9	2

Japanese compared to other MFLs:

Pupils currently study both French and Spanish from Year 7. From Year 9 they have the choice of continuing with French or Spanish, or to start German or Japanese. The GCSE Japanese language lessons are all off-timetable, so pupils need to be dedicated to attempt it; the current cohort is very enthusiastic!

At present, the largest group of Japanese language learners is in the Sixth Form. As part of the International Baccalaureate (IB), students must study a foreign language, and at Impington they can choose between English, French,

Case study updated: Summer 2011



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Comments from pupils at Impington Village College:

- “It is a good language for visual learners.”
- “I love the challenge of working with different alphabets, but it is a challenge to remember vocab’.”
- “The structure seems easier than other languages”
- “I want to visit Japan!”



German, Spanish, Russian or Japanese. Japanese can be started from scratch on the IB *ab initio* course, or at the higher language B level.

There are also opportunities to study Japanese or Chinese as a club activities. In addition to language, this involves cultural activities such as origami and the tea ceremony.

Exams:

Overall GCSE results:

5 A*-C Grades = 79%

2010: 5 A*-C Grades including Maths/English = 64%

2009: 5 A*-C Grades including Maths/English = 60%

2008: 5 A*-C Grades including Maths/English = 63%

Japanese Exam Results:

Students studying Japanese may take GCSE, IB *ab initio* or level B. (Level B language students can choose between the Standard and Higher level subjects.)

* *A student's examination performance in individual subjects is scored on a scale of 1–7. 7 is the top mark and 2 or less is considered a fail.*

Year	No. of Pupils	Grades
2010	2	Ax2
2009	0	
2008	4	A*x1, Ax3

IB Japanese Results	Year	No. of Pupils	Ab initio Level	Language B
	2011	8	Lvl 7 x2, Lvl 5 x4, Lvl 4 x2	(Higher) Lvl 6 x1, (Standard) Lvl 5
	2010	5	Lvl 5 x1, Lvl 4 x2, Lvl 3 x2	(Higher) Lvl 7 x1
	2009	10	Lvl 6 x1, Lvl 5 x4, Lvl 4 x1 Lvl3 x4	(Higher) Lvl 4 x1, (Standard) Lvl 7

History of Japanese

Japanese has been taught at Impington within the IB curriculum since 1999, when it started with just three students. As numbers were small, to start with it was taught outside of the main timetable. It was moved on to the timetable in 2004, at which point the numbers increased. The IB course is now well established as the school has 12 years experience in teaching Japanese. Currently there are around 20 members of the IB *ab initio* classes, and four in the language B classes.

In 2009-2010 Japanese was also brought into the curriculum for GCSE students. This starts from Year 9, so students have three years to prepare for GCSE exams. The first cohort will complete their exams in 2012.

Budget:

The main costs to the school are for one part-time Japanese teacher, and for the large amount of photocopying (as all materials and resources have been made from scratch).

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Support:

The school has previously gained extra funding as a Language College.



In addition Impington has taken part in the British Council's Emersion course four times, which involved going to Kyoto to study Japanese. Each time Impington Students joined other schools for two weeks in Tokyo or Kyoto with language lessons in the morning and cultural trips in the afternoon. Once this opportunity was no longer available they applied for a £1,000 grant from the *Sasakawa Foundation* in 2007 to help towards funding a trip modelled on the same pattern.

Two sixth form students have been selected (in 2007 and 2008) to take part in the Japan-EU Mutual Understanding Scholarship administered by the Japanese Government. Participants take part in an orientation in Tokyo, and are then sent out to stay in a Japanese host family and attend Japanese schools for 5-6 months.

Exchanges and Trips:

Impington used to have a partner school connected through *Ritsumeikan University* in Kyoto, although they have found it difficult to find schools willing to exchange with such a small number of students.

Each year Impington students visit Japan for a week to ten days (depending on the exchange rate/budget). This trip has always been kept under £1,000 and is paid for by parents. In 2011 this trip included excursions to Kyoto and Nara to sightsee at various temples, castles, bamboo woods, hot springs etc. The students were also introduced to several aspects of Japanese culture, such as making traditional Japanese sweets, tea ceremony, taking part in a *matsuri* festival as well as meditating at a *zen* temple.

Challenges of Japanese:

IB specific teaching materials and text books can be hard to find, so staff have needed to make almost all of the worksheets etc. from scratch. This has ensured that students study the appropriate materials for the IB syllabus, but it was initially a huge amount of work to create.

Japanese Teaching Staff 2010-2011:

Impington has one part-time teacher of Japanese

Teacher of Japanese – Teaches 4 days a week

Native speaker who came to Impington Village College in 2002. He Became a qualified teacher via the GTP Programme which allowed him to study part-time while he taught. In addition to teaching Japanese, he also teaches KS3 Spanish.

Long-term future:

The IB section of the Sixth Form is now well established and looks to have a stable future in teaching Japanese. Staff hope that it will also be possible to continue with the GCSE classes that were started in 2010, however this is slightly less certain, and depends on funding.

Advice to other schools in a similar position:

Teaching IB Japanese is fantastic for the students, but be aware that it can be difficult to find appropriate text books. You might need to create resources yourself.





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