

# Case Study – UK Schools Teaching Japanese



## Tavistock College · Devon



JAPAN FOUNDATION

### Key Facts about the School:

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**Website:** <http://www.tavistockcollege.devon.sch.uk/>

**Number of students:** 1326 (2009-2010)

**Age range:** 11 - 18

**Type of school:** State Community Comprehensive School

**Specialisms:** Specialist language college

### Brief description of the school:

Tavistock College is a 11-18 comprehensive community college with Specialist Language Status. The school is located in Tavistock in West Devon and accepts children from Tavistock itself but also from the middle of Dartmoor, the north of Plymouth and across the Tamar into Cornwall. The school has had Specialist Language College status since 1996, with international topics and issues reflected across the curriculum. Tavistock currently offers five foreign languages: Japanese, Spanish, French, German and Italian.

The school is one of the largest Japanese teaching centers at secondary level. Japanese is taught in a similar way to other modern foreign languages; pupils currently study one language from Year 7, choosing from French, Spanish and Japanese, and they may also take a second or third at GCSE. Therefore Japanese is taught within the curriculum from Year 7 - Year 13 offering both GCSE and A-level (AS and A2) examinations.

### Japanese set up:

Number of Japanese language students: 342

Year Groups: Year 7 -13 inclusive

### Japanese time-table:

Year Group	Study Hours per Week	Number of Students	Number of Groups
Year 7	3	60	3
Year 8	3	66	3
Year 9	3	68	3
Year 10	2.5	57	3
Year 11	2.5	78	3
Year 12	4.5	8	1
Year 13	4.5	5	1

Students currently study one language from Year 7, choosing from French Spanish and Japanese, and they may also take a second or third at GCSE.



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## Benefits to the students:

- Students of Japanese tend to have a deeper cross cultural awareness and a deeper understanding of Japan.
- Over the last 12 years, 160 students have taken part in the Japanese Exchange with Edogawa Ward in Tokyo.
- Learning Japanese improves students' chances at university/ job interviews
- Greater job opportunities in all areas.



## Exams:

### Overall GCSE results:

5 A\*-C Grades = 57%

5 A\*-C Grades including Maths/English = 48% 2010

5 A\*-C Grades including Maths/English = 50% 2009

5 A\*-C Grades including Maths/English = 56% 2008

### Japanese Exam Results:

Students studying Japanese may take Edexcel GCSE long course, AS and A2 exams:

2009 -10 GCSE A\*-C = 82%

AS/A2 A\*-G = 100%

In 2010, 46% of GCSE students achieved an A\* or A (A\* = 20%) These results were the best MFL results for the school.



## Budget:

There is no set Budget for Japanese as money comes from the main MFL budget. The school has not purchased any new materials for the past two years, so the main expenses are staff costs and photocopying. The school has exchange with Edogawa Ward in Japan, but this is funded by parents and costs are kept down by having accommodation at host families. The current cost of the exchange programme is £1,300 per participant.

## History of Japanese

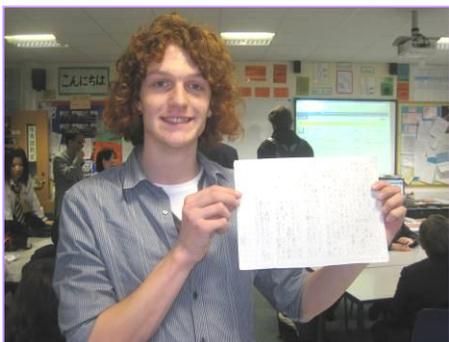
In 1996 it was necessary to teach a non-European language to become a new Language College. The school selected Japanese as its non-European language and then used the extra funding from their Specialist Language College status to pay for a new Languages Block, including 16 new classrooms with interactive whiteboards. 3-4 of these classrooms are used solely for Japanese.

The Japanese department grew substantially to 6 teachers from 2003-2006, but found this unsustainable due to the difficulty of hiring new Japanese Language teaching staff.

## Support:

The school has benefited from supportive senior management and a long-term approach to teaching Japanese within the curriculum. In addition to the extra funding provided as a specialist language college, the school has also benefited from the following programmes:

- Funding from the Daiwa Foundation in 1998- 2001
- Funding from the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation from 1998-2001
- Received materials from the Japan Foundation Donations Programme 1998-2006
- Tavistock always enters 50-80 students in the Nihongo Cup



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## Other Japan-related activities at Tavistock:

The school holds Japan Days and Primary Language Days where primary school students come to take part in language and cultural activities. Japanese used to be taught regularly at 16 feeder primary language schools; however this was discontinued in 2009 due to insufficient Japanese language-speaking staff.

Tavistock students have the chance to go to Edogawa Ward, Japan as part of an exchange; there are also opportunities for students to host Japanese students that come to the UK as part of the exchange.

Students have also learned calligraphy and origami during cultural visits to the Japanese Embassy in London.

The college also has a jujitsu club where students can train in the Japanese martial art.

## Challenges of Japanese:

One of the main challenges for teaching Japanese has been to continue to achieve comparatively good results in exams at all levels (GCSE, AS, A2.) As Japanese is now well established at the school, these results help to ensure the continued support of senior management.

The Japanese teaching staff admit that it was difficult to get parents, staff and senior management on board during the first few years, but now problems have shifted to maintaining momentum and finding enough quality teachers to maintain the subject.

## Japanese Teaching Staff 2010-2011:

Tavistock currently employs 4 members of staff for Japanese. There are two non-native speakers that can teach both French and Japanese. In addition to this, there is a part-time non-native teacher as well as a native-speaking assistant.

### Head of Japanese – Teaches 37 hours a fortnight

Was a participant on the JET programme before doing an MA in Japanese at Sheffield University. Completed a PGCE at Nottingham University in Japanese and French. Has taught at Tavistock since 1996.

### Teacher of Japanese – Teaches 42 hours a fortnight

Also completes a PGCE at Nottingham University in Japanese and French. Taught at Tavistock in 2001-2003, then again since 2007.

### Part-time NQT Teacher of Japanese – Teaches 28 hours a fortnight

Previously worked as a Japanese translator for the Ministry of Justice in Poland. Has been at Tavistock from 2009.

### Japanese native speaker

Currently helps with all Key Stages, and has been with the school since 2005.

## Long-term future:

In Tavistock staff are aiming to consolidate their past successes and continue to have an excellent environment for students to learn Japanese. They hope their success at GCSE may continue. Lastly they are keen to maintain strong links and exchanges with Edogawa Ward near Tokyo.

## Advice to other schools in a similar position:

Ensure senior management has a long-term commitment to Japanese.

**Would you like to know more about how the Japan Foundation  
can support Japanese at your school?**

Contact us today to find out how we can help you:

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