

Case Study – Dartford Grammar School



Dartford Grammar School · Dartford



Key Facts about the School:

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Website: www.dartfordgrammarschool.org.uk

Number of students: 1450 + 600 Sixth Form

Age range: 11 - 18 (2019)

Type of school: Academy

Brief description of the school:

Dartford Grammar School was founded in 1576, and is a selective secondary academy in Dartford, Kent. The school is a boys' school from ages 11-16 but admits girls to its Sixth Form. Judged Outstanding in every [Ofsted inspection](#), including the 2018 [internal inspection](#), Dartford Grammar School provides a broad, balanced international education, following the principles of the International Baccalaureate.

Every student studies either Japanese or Mandarin Chinese from Year 7 and an additional European language from Year 8. The school's mission statement is '**A learning community developing international citizens.**'

History of Japanese:

Japanese was introduced in 1995 and was immediately popular. It began as a beginners' IB *Ab initio* course, along with another beginners' course for Year 7 students. In 2003 the school introduced A-Level Japanese as well, but then this was phased out in 2008 in favour of the International Baccalaureate curriculum only for the Sixth Form. After over 20 years of Japanese at the school, 50% of the school's Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 students study Japanese, as well as approximately 80 students in the Sixth Form.

Japanese set up:

Each year, there are 90 pupils who start Japanese in Year 7, starting their five year journey towards a GCSE. Pupils receive at least three 50 minute classes per week in each year. In Year 8, students are required to choose a second GCSE language from a list of European languages that includes Latin.

In the Sixth Form, students study the International Baccalaureate where they have 3 x 50 minute lessons a week. There is more information about the IB Programmes on the following page.



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From January 2017, the school introduced a new course for 35 Year 7 students, The Japanese Excellence Programme. These students have committed to studying Japanese for five 50 minute lessons per week, two of which are after school. This intensive course will lead to an early GCSE entry in Year 10, followed by a bridging course in Year 11 that is designed to lay stronger foundations for the students' continuation of Japanese studies at IB level. This programme now spans Year 7 – 9, with the first cohort sitting the early GCSE in 2019. In April 2018, the Year JEP students attended a week's residential trip at Chaucer College Canterbury where they participated in integration activities with Japanese students from Shumei Junior High School. This trip will be an annual event for Year 8 JEP students.



School Exchange

In October 2017 the school celebrated the 10th anniversary of its partnership with two schools in Wakayama city. Zoe Jestico, a teacher of Japanese, initially set up an exchange trip to Tokyo for DGS pupils in 2004. This carried on for 3 trips, followed by a trip to Hiroshima . After that, the school embarked on a long-standing exchange programme with two schools in Wakayama. The Japanese partner schools, one state and one independent, are likeminded schools so it is likely that the exchange will keep going!

Every March approximately 40 students from Koyo and Kaichi High schools visit Dartford Grammar School. The Japanese pupils participate in a programme of trips and integration days within the school. It is an excellent opportunity for friendships to develop between DGS students and the Japanese students, and the benefits to their language learning are indisputable.

DGS staff say that the exchange programme is “undoubtedly the key to maintaining the students’ interest and giving a purpose to their learning”. Students exchange hand-written letters regularly, and participate in Skype chats. When pupils from both countries have the opportunity to interact with each other during the exchange programme, the excitement is palpable!



Benefits to Pupils:

The popularity of Japanese has helped students enjoy learning languages. Dartford Grammar School takes every opportunity to present languages as the core of its international curriculum, emphasising communication and respect for other cultures. Students enjoy learning the new and artistic skill of writing and recognising characters. Japanese

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culture is very different from anything experienced in Europe and so students gain a great deal of personal fulfilment from this exposure. They enjoy being different from their friends.

Challenges of Japanese:

- “We have found it difficult to achieve good results at International Baccalaureate Higher Level. The numbers of students applying for this course has also been low in the last few years so we have focused on Ab initio and Standard Level. However, we hope that the Japanese Excellence programme will encourage students to take Japanese at Higher level in the future.”
- “Our Mandarin provision on the curriculum is equal to that of Japanese. We find that Mandarin receives a high level of funding in comparison to Japanese, so it is a challenge to offer equally beneficial projects, resources and trips to the students. However, with the support of our Head Teacher Mr Oakes, we strive hard as a school to achieve parity in all opportunities for language students”

Rationale for teaching Japanese

At Dartford Grammar School all pupils study either Japanese or Mandarin from Year 7 and take this language up to GCSE level. The idea behind offering East Asian languages at Dartford Grammar school was to stimulate a love of language learning. Since 2008 the school has adopted a phrase, ‘enjoy doing well’. The development of Japanese and the introduction of Mandarin Chinese have certainly made a significant contribution towards this simple educational goal.

The school requires all boys to take two languages at GCSE. The enjoyment they feel for Japanese has had a real impact on their appreciation of the benefits of learning languages in general, which in turn has helped the European language department. There is a full programme of enrichment opportunities ranging from cultural experiences to careers fairs and speaking competitions. The school is now at the beginning of a journey to establish stronger links with UK / Japanese businesses with the aim of offering meaningful work experience in the UK or Japan.

By 2020 there will be 450 pupils learning Japanese in Key Stage 3-4 as well as approximately 80 post-16 students studying Japanese.

Exams:

GCSE:

Dartford Grammar School has achieved exceptional GCSE results. In 2018 97% of pupils received grade A*-C, with 56% achieving A or A*.

IB:

The IB course covers 3 levels, a beginners course (ab initio), a standard level course (for students who have some prior exposure) and a higher level course. Approximately 40 students in Year 13 take the IB Japanese. Half of them have studied the language from scratch in Year 12 at Ab initio Level, and half have continued their studies post-GCSE on the Standard Level.

GCSE	2018	2017	2016
A*- A	56%	62%	81%
A*- C	97%	94%	98%

IB Average Points Score	2018	2017	2016
Language B Standard Level	6.25	6	5.67
Ab initio Level	6.26	5.5	5.52

Japan related Competitions:

Students from DGS have entered contests such as the [Nihongo Cup](#), The Japan Foundation’s [Webpage Contest for Schools](#) and the Japan Society’s [Haiku Contest](#). In June 2016, and again in 2018 Year 9 students, Krishanth Dilrukshan, and Adrian Manickarajah were awarded first place in the [Nihongo Cup](#).



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Japan related clubs and enrichment projects:

- There is a weekly Japanese Culture Club for KS3 students which is popular and well-attended and offers the opportunity to discover more about Japanese culture outside the classroom.
- Enrichment projects to different year groups, including the highly successful Creativity Week Japanese Culture Days which include projects on Noh Theatre Mask Making, Sushi Making and Taiko Drumming. Gifted and Talented projects include *kamishibai*, haiku, and a 'Spelling Bee' contest.
- Trips to the Sixth Form Japan Day.
- Visits from Waseda University and High school for integration and cultural programmes
- In July 2016 and 2017, DGS students participated in the UCL Japan Young Challenge at the University of London, where they were involved in lectures and workshops with Japanese students to discuss 'Humanity in Disasters' and 'Global Problems'.
- Parent Taster sessions in Japanese every year for the parents of Year 7 students in order to help them understand how best to support their sons.
- Trips to the [Japan Studies Department of Oxford University](#)
- Participation in [The Japan House Volunteer Scheme](#)



Sakura Network

In 2016 DGS was awarded [Sakura Network](#) status by the Japan Foundation [which they received at the Houses of Parliament](#). During the ceremony, two students gave speeches in front of MPs and members of the Japan Foundation. This funding has allowed the school to continue their provision of conversation classes with a native speaker, outreach work to primary schools, internal and external enrichment projects, and to offer networking events for Head Teachers

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and Japanese teachers. In Dartford Grammar School the Sakura Network Manager Katy Simpson, who is also a teacher of Japanese.

The Sakura Network funding is spent on projects and events aimed at promoting Japanese within the school and other schools in the UK, as well as supporting other schools to set up Japanese or expand their Japanese provision.



DGS was awarded Sakura Network membership in front of MP Gareth Johnson, a DGS alumni, and Nicky Morgan, the Secretary of State for Education



Japanese Teaching Staff

Currently there are 4 Japanese teachers in the school. The school often has a Japanese trainee teacher working with the department throughout the year.

Long-term future

Japanese has been well-established at the school for over 20 years, and has gone from strength to strength within that time. By 2020 there will be 3 classes of 30 in every year in KS3 and KS4, and approximately 80 in the Sixth Form. Therefore the awareness of the language and culture will continue to spread within the school. Through involvement in the Sakura Network, the school hopes to pass on their enthusiasm for Japanese to other primary and secondary schools and expand the network of schools offering Japanese.



“The best thing about teaching Japanese is the level of enthusiasm from the students, who are genuinely

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fascinated by the culture and the novelty of the writing system.”



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

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