

CLASSROOM

THE CLASSICS

ANDREW CHRISTIE, Assistant Head at Streatham & Clapham High School explains the relevance of subjects rooted in the ancient world

Latin is a language,
Dead as dead can be,
First it killed the Romans,
Now it's killing me.

This little rhyme is often used to question the relevance of Latin in today's society. Does Latin continue to meet the needs of pupils who are being prepared for jobs that haven't even been created yet? What role does classics have in developing 21st-century skills to equip our young people for their future careers? At our school, we believe Latin, Ancient Greek and classical civilisation continue to have much to offer our pupils, with all study Latin from Year Seven to Nine.

As Latin underpins much of English vocabulary, the positive impact of learning Latin on developing literacy skills has long been recognised. When learning an ancient language, pupils acquire new vocabulary by understanding the roots of words. English is brought to life when a pupil suddenly realises that there's a connection between words like 'dormitory' and the Latin verb *dormire* (to sleep) or that the words 'scribe', 'scribble' and 'description' all relate to *scribere* (to write).

The structured nature of the language also helps provide an understanding of the mechanics of language, both of English and other languages. As Latin and Ancient Greek are not linear languages, like English, it's like cracking a code. As pupils have to consider the function of every word in a sentence before



coming up with a suitable translation, they have to think logically, critically and creatively.

The benefits of learning Latin should be open to everyone, so we send teachers into two local primary schools. Our teachers convey their love of the subject through songs, games and even puppetry. It's a joy to watch classes perform *tres porci parvi* (Three little pigs)!

By studying ancient texts and literature, even in translation, we're given privileged access to a world of ideas that form the foundation of modern philosophical, cultural and political thought. Classical influences and allusions are everywhere, from Shakespeare to soap operas, so classics can lead to a richer appreciation of the world we live in.

Inspired by the Advocating Classics Education campaign, which wants to give all UK secondary school pupils access to classical civilisation studies, our school has welcomed 34 pupils from five local schools to take a GCSE in the subject, granting as many young pupils as possible access to its rich cultural legacy. 🐷

IT'S NOT HARD TO ENTHUSE
YOUNG PEOPLE *when the*
similarities and differences between
the cultures ARE SO APPARENT



HOW IT'S RELEVANT FOR TODAY'S PUPILS

- Latin and Ancient Greek increase aptitude in reading and communication through vocabulary acquisition.
- Ancient languages help us understand the mechanics and structure of language, from modern languages to computer code.
- Translating Latin and Ancient Greek improves problem-solving skills, as it requires pupils to develop flexible and logical thinking.
- Classics develops transferable skills and provides access to a wide variety of careers.
- Classics provides access to some of the greatest literature and art ever produced.
- Classics gives us a historical perspective which can inform our view of today's world.
- Classics improves cultural literacy through an understanding of allusions in art, literature, film, politics etc.
- The cultures of the Greeks and the Romans are interesting.
- Classics is fun!

