

FAQ—Frequently Asked Questions

Beginning this year, all pupils in years 5 through 8 will have two additional hours of language instruction, either in German or English, in our newly introduced Plus Groups. Placement in these groups is determined by the individual pupil's linguistic background and abilities.

The following are the most frequently asked questions about this new language programme:

1. What are the goals of the new Plus Groups?

Through these groups, all pupils at the DSL should be able to strengthen and further develop their language skills and competencies so that they can become truly bilingual speakers of English and German. Similar to sports training, our Plus Courses should help pupils train their linguistic muscles, flexibility and endurance in a range of practical exercises and activities.

The German Plus Course aims to lay the linguistic foundations required for native proficiency in the key skill areas—Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. In so doing, we hope to assure for the pupil's successful participation in all the academic subjects taught in German across the curriculum.

The English Plus Course has similar goals. In addition, it aims to assure that all pupils will be able to successfully participate in English lessons taught at the level of native speakers. For this reason, pupils in our secondary school are no longer streamed in their regular English classes on the basis of their linguistic ability. The homogenous Plus Courses are meant to help prepare them for their advanced, heterogeneous English lessons.

2. How has the division of pupils into Plus Groups been carried out?

German and English teachers from years 4 through 7 conferred shortly before the summer holidays to discuss the linguistic abilities of each of their pupils and to select his / her appropriate Plus Group. The form tutors were also consulted in this placement process. When pupils were of equal ability in both languages, preference was given to the German Plus Group.

3. How is it possible that my child, who is a native speaker of German, has been assigned to a Plus Group in German?

Not every native speaker has mastered the formal, academic language required in secondary school, particularly when it comes to written assignments. At the DSL,

we have German native speakers who can already participate successfully in English lessons taught at native speaker level and attain good marks but have some difficulty in German lessons, particularly in those that involve written composition. The decisive factor is not so much whether a pupil is a native speaker but rather whether his/her academic language competencies have reached the required level.

4. Can my child change Plus Groups?

In principle, yes, since all the Plus Courses in a given year group meet at the same time. At the beginning of this school year, a number of parents requested that we reconsider our decision regarding their child's placement. After subject teachers were consulted, a few pupils were allowed to change groups. At the end of the first semester, *after the first marking period*, further changes can be considered. Until then, pupils should remain in their assigned groups.

5. With whom can I speak if I have questions about the school's linguistic evaluation of my child?

Nina Hermesdorf (nina.hermesdorf@dslondon.org.uk) coordinates the placement of pupils in appropriate Plus Groups. If you are interested in discussing your child's academic performance and language ability, however, you should contact his / her subject teachers.

6. What is 'ILS'?

'ILS' stands for 'Independent Language Studies' and is led by Dr Elisabeth Cannon. A total of thirteen pupils from years 5 to 8 are participating in this new programme for gifted pupils. The prerequisite is complete academic bilingualism, appropriate to the pupil's year group, as well as impressive academic motivation and achievement and a clear ability to work independently.

At the moment the ILS group is working on a project involving the novel 'Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes' by Eleanor Coerr. Every Monday pupils meet with Dr Cannon in the zero-hour to set the plan of work for the upcoming week. During the weekly Plus lessons, pupils work independently in the library or in the newly furnished work area nearby.

7. How are secondary school pupils supported who are newly arrived at the DSL from English schools?

This year a new support course is being offered to those who have joined our school from the British educational system and who need intensive work in German in order to cope with the linguistic demands of both their year group's

German lessons and its lessons in other subjects taught in German. To help prepare them, Ms Claudia Plug is offering seven newcomers from years 5 and 6 four periods of German language support each week. In addition, these pupils will attend two of their form's regular four weekly German lessons as well as the two periods of their German Plus Course. Thus, they will be having a total of eight periods of German instruction per week to help them reach the linguistic level required for mainstream classes. These newcomers will not be marked in their form's regular German lessons but rather in Ms Plug's support course.

Fragen zu Konzept und Umsetzung der Bilingualität seitens der Eltern basierend auf Rückmeldungen zum Round Table am 04.12.2017

Questions were answered by the English team

- **Wie wird sichergestellt, dass Kinder, die ins deutsche Schulsystem zurückkehren, dort dem deutschen Englisch-Lehrplan folgen können, wenn sie hier an der DSL (für kurze Zeit) auf landessprachlichem Niveau unterrichtet wurden; insbesondere in Bezug auf Grammatikkenntnisse und Wortschatz?**

We are living in the country of the target language, English; consequently, in a full-immersion environment, whereas grammar and vocabulary is taught in a foreign language setting in a grammar-driven manner and is a substitute for genuine communication in a language. Therefore, students returning to Germany will have acquired genuine communication skills and will have learned grammar and vocabulary by immersion.

- **Wie kann unterschiedlichen Leistungsniveaus im Englischunterricht Rechnung getragen werden? Muttersprachler sind teilweise unterfordert vs. neu hinzugezogene deutsche Kinder überfordert.**

The new English lessons are taught with two levels in mind (in analogy to the IB system): standard and higher. Higher level is the default mode. Standards level accommodates intermediate and beginner learners. Currently, a Smart Group is producing differentiated English materials to support mixed-ability teaching.

- **Sollte nicht der Englisch Plus-Unterricht (lower level) mehr Fördercharakter haben, damit diese Kinder die Chance bekommen sich im Kernunterricht zu verbessern?**

The Plus Groups are not remedial but function as a language gym, strengthening the *weaker* language. They are not an extension of regular classes because their goal is to provide language exercises, which promote and propel speaking, listening, reading and writing.

- **Kann bessere Abstimmung zwischen Kern- und Plus-Stunden stattfinden? Z.B. Themen der Kernstunden vertieft werden (Aufbau von Wortschatz für Textanalysen, Argumentation etc.)**

The Plus Groups and regular English classes are not linked through content, but through language competences. If we continue the metaphor of the gym, the Plus Groups are where exercises are done to strengthen language performance rather than work on specific content (just as tennis players do not take their racquets to the gym, but do exercises to enhance their performance!)

- **Inwiefern findet eine Differenzierung im Kernunterricht in standard und higher level statt (bezogen auf Klassenarbeiten, Unterrichtsinhalt etc.)? Könnte die Einteilung besser an die Eltern kommuniziert werden?**

Higher Level (HL) is Gymnasium standard and most pupils are on this level. A few pupils, such as those who are relatively new arrivals in the UK, may not be up to that level yet, so they are placed on Standard Level (SL). Teachers communicate this with pupils and the respective level are indicated on reports. The aim is for pupils to move onto HL by the time they finish Year 8.

- **Wie findet eine Kontrolle der Unterrichtsqualität und der Lernentwicklung in Englisch Plus ohne Curriculum, Vokabel- und Grammatiktests statt?**

The Plus classes are small groups in which the focus is on practising, not testing, just as in a gym there are no quizzes, but weights, for example, are increased to improve performance. Teachers take on the role of mentors who know individual pupils well and encourage them to take on a growth mindset, engaging in increasingly challenging activities. Teachers comment on pupils' progress in the Plus Groups in their half-year and end of year reports.

- **Wie kann der Übergang von GS in die 5. Klasse verbessert werden? Wäre eine zusätzliche Förderung deutschsprachiger Kinder denkbar?**

We are conscious of the challenges faced when pupils make the transition from Years 4 to 5 and so a SMART Group has been set up, under the leadership of Dr Pilarczyk, to re-examine this issue. The aim is to further improve the primary-secondary transition and make it as smooth as possible.

- **Warum wurden landessprachliche Lehrbücher im Englischunterricht eingeführt?**

Second language textbooks are tailored to the demands of second language learning by monolingual groups in a foreign country. However, our pupils are not in that situation, but are living in an English environment. Therefore, English textbooks in the target language offer a far more appropriate and richer resource for our students at DSL.