

THE WEEK

Spring/Summer 2021

LANGUAGES ARE IMPORTANT IN THE REAL WORLD

Aysgarth pre-prep pupils learn French from reception onwards (the school is co-ed from nursery to year 3)



A teaching review at Aysgarth School, an all-boys' prep school in North Yorkshire, has injected creativity and energy in to lessons.

According to Guy Askew, Aysgarth's head of foreign languages and scholarships coordinator, adopting the lexicogrammar approach, championed by languages teaching expert Dr Gianfranco Conti, was a "game changer". This essentially ensures that grammar and vocabulary are taught through sentence builders so pupils can see

them in context in a ready-made structure.

"The Common Entrance syllabus is very grammar driven and some might describe it as quite dry," says Mr Askew. "As an antidote to that, we plan lessons around creativity, challenge and competition. Part of Conti's theory is teaching through patterns so boys are not overloaded with information; tweaking rather than starting from scratch every time."

With boys receiving between three and four lessons

of French per week, enjoyment of the subject is all important. Since the Conti method was adopted, perception of languages within the school has improved greatly and boys are going on to secure places at leading schools with top results in French.

"Boys know languages are important in the real world," says Mr Askew. "From university places to future jobs, travel and interaction with different nationalities, children are never too young to understand that."

