



Founded 1125

October 2018



Dear Parents of Year 7 students,

INTRODUCTION TO THE MANDARIN EXCELLENCE PROGRAMME

Introduction

The Mandarin Excellence Programme is supported by University College London, the British Council and the Department for Education.

Mandarin Chinese opens up a world of opportunity. It is the most spoken language in the world and it can connect speakers with an exciting and dynamic culture. Mandarin has been identified as one of the most important languages for the United Kingdom's future prosperity. We are delighted that Reading School has been selected to be one of a few schools nationally involved in the prestigious Mandarin Excellence programme.

The intensive language programme will be delivered over a period of two years (Year 7 and Year 8). It will involve a mixture of lessons and other activities including self-study beyond lesson time. Therefore, we are looking for committed your men who are intellectually curious and want to be part of a challenging, prestigious programme that focuses on academic excellence in a Modern Language. This is highly regarded by potential employers.

In order to be eligible to participate in the programme, Reading School needed to be rated as 'outstanding' by Ofsted, be committed to developing Mandarin in the curriculum and co-curricular offer and be positive regarding developing links with China. In addition, we needed to have a strong presence of at least two languages in the curriculum.

How does the programme work?

We need to enrol up to 30 Year 7 students onto the programme each year, and retain these students for the two year programme.

Participating students will receive teacher taught classroom lessons each week and also after school sessions, self-study and potentially part-funded study courses in China and the United Kingdom.

Annual hurdle tests will ensure that participants are on their way to achieving a level of fluency in Mandarin Chinese.

Our links with Lunhua Education in Suzhou ensure that the opportunity to put the language and cultural knowledge into practice will be evident in the future and is also illustrated by the involvement of a number of Year 7 students and families in the visit of students from Suzhou currently.

The intensive language programme is funded by the Department for Education and delivered by the UCL IOE Confucius Institute and the British Council. Miss Chan has been delivering taster sessions to Year 7 students this term. Year 7 students have to date encountered twenty symbols, on themes such as greetings, numbers and colours.

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After half term, timetabled lessons for those students selected to participate in the prestigious Mandarin Excellence programme. An assessment will be undertaken by students who wish to be considered for the Mandarin Excellence Programme. It will consist of around 20 non-multiple choice questions, including English to Mandarin and Mandarin to English.

We are seeking to select students who have an aptitude for language learning and crucially who have the right attitude and are committed. Funding from the Department for Education for the course is contingent on ensuring that selected students complete both years of the programme (Year 7 and Year 8).

It should be noted that if your son is selected to be part of the prestigious Mandarin Excellence Programme, there will be an impact in terms of workload and on the organisation and provision of other Modern Foreign Languages. The potential impact is noted below:

1. This means that they lose one of the three Modern Foreign Languages, but retain two and Latin.
2. They do not get to choose which Modern Foreign Language they lose at this stage, as it depends which language they have timetabled during Period 5 on a Monday.
3. They will have the lesson Period 5 on Monday of both weeks, as well as during their mutual PSHE slot (3 lessons a fortnight).
4. Later in the year, they will chose which one Modern Foreign Language they will specialise in during Year 8, alongside Mandarin and Latin.
5. In Year 8 Mandarin lessons will appear on their timetables (3 lessons a fortnight, like other Modern Foreign Language subjects).
6. At the end of Year 8, Mandarin classes come to a conclusion, with no follow up GCSE course available at Reading School although this may be pursued externally. However the students are left with a wonderful experience, which may reap huge dividends and offer unexpected opportunities later in life.
7. At the end of Year 8 all students that had studied Mandarin must continue with at least one language for GCSE (from their one Modern Foreign Language chosen at end of Year 7 and Latin).

Next steps

Should you wish your son to be considered for this exciting opportunity, please complete the Microsoft form by following the link below, by midday on Monday 15th October at the latest:

[Mandarin Excellence Programme form](#)

Your son will then sit the assessment test which will take place next Tuesday, 16th October, at lunchtime.

It is hoped that students will find out whether they have been successful in joining the programme before half term.

If you do not wish your son to continue with the programme, then no further action is required, but it is hoped that he has enjoyed the chance to explore a new language.

Yours sincerely,

Mr AM Robson
Headmaster

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