

Uccle, 16th July 2019

Dear Parents,

As you may have heard our school will re-organise the way in which L2 classes are organised from September onward. In previous years one of the groups was termed the “bilingual “ group and this was where the “best” 26/28 students were placed in both the L2 English and L2 French classes in each year group from Primary through to S5 secondary. As the German L2 numbers are lower, there is usually only 1 group per year level in German and so there can only be one class. This sort of streaming is an Uccle only invention, and does not occur in the other European schools in Brussels. It is also not the way education in a European School should be arranged. Numerous studies show that a mixed-ability system is far superior for all learners and garners more successful learning outcomes both for both gifted students and those who require extra support to achieve the outcomes. The system of selecting the “best” students to make up the “bilingual class” is flawed. It does not select only those learners who are truly bilingual but rather just the best 26/28 to fill the group. It also does not allow for the 29th or 30th student who now must go to the “next best” class. I made the decision as soon as it became clear that our school was not offering an equitable, inclusive, and fair system of L2 education.

Students who are judged by their teachers to have an advanced level of L2 (meaning that they will not benefit from spending all periods in the L2 class) can be placed in an enrichment group which will take place at the same time as the L2 classes. This can be any size group (depending on the numbers of students who have the required level), and could even be *two* groups if it is necessary. Students who attend the L2 enrichment group will not be taught the L2 curriculum in these lessons but rather be challenged to exercise their stronger level of language, trough, for example, study of literature, engagement in higher level debate or other activities that would be challenging for their level of L2. They must attend a minimum of 1 of the original L2 classes and all the results/end of years marks and grades will come from this class. As an example - a student could attend 3 enrichment classes with other students from the same year group and 2 classes with the original L2 group.

Students who are significantly below the level of L2 would also receive extra support. This has been referred to in the past as “*rattrapage*” (remedial) and will continue as before. These students will attend the usual L2 periods and then be offered support lessons during free periods on their timetable. Only in cases where a students has an extreme language deficit would he or she attend a beginners group and not the main L2 classes. This situation would be short-term, as language learning requires as much immersion as possible, so in most cases it is better for the student to attend the L2 lessons even when they have difficulty in accessing the curriculum.

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Both the enrichment and support classes are part of our Educational Support provision which should offer assistance to student at both end of the spectrum.

The final L2 Bacculaureate measures all students with the same exam and everyone should be given the opportunity to achieve the highest grade possible. I have added a table below showing the equivalences of the level of the language to be achieved in the various languages of the system. As you can see the L2 should be at an A2 level by the end of the primary cycle, and C1 by the end of the secondary cycle. This does not prevent students from reaching a higher level at any given point. This enrichment concept (mixed ability program) recognises and ensures that students are challenged at whatever level they are, but still measures them with the same exam/test/assessment at the end of year 7.

In Summary, as of September 2019 :

Primary - P1,P2,P3,P4 and P5 - all year groups will operate mixed ability classes. Enrichment classes would be scheduled for the same time as some of the usual lessons. "*Rattrapage*" (remedial classes) will be arranged for students who are new, or have a significant language deficit.

Secondary - S1, S4, S5 and the Bacculaureate cycle will operate mixed ability classes. Enrichment classes would be scheduled for the same time as some of the usual lessons. "*Rattrapage*" (remedial classes) will be arranged for students who are new or have a significant language deficit.

In the case of S2 and S3, the current arrangements will continue into the following school year as the L2 colleagues agree that it would be more pedagogically sound that it should remain until the end of the observation cycle- (S1-S3).

It is important that everyone understand that our system does not offer *two* L1'S . The decision for which language should be L1 is not one made by parents in any case. L1 is the child's dominant language, and only when it is not clear which language that is, will the school arrange testing on enrolment. Based on these results, a decision will be made by the director to place a child in the correct section, to match the dominant language. Change of section should only happen in extraordinary cases where a strong pedagogical need is recommended by one of the members of the Class council.

In **Secondary S1**- students choose an L3. This is considered to be a *new* language, and taught as such. Again, you can see the levels to be reached in L3: A1+ by the end of S3. It is important that students choose a new language for L3. Sometimes students think that as they already have a very good level of L3, it will be a good choice - leading to easy high marks in tests and exams. This is rarely the result; in fact, students tend to become bored and do not engage with the learning process. It is a missed opportunity to gain another language. While differentiation will occur in the teaching of L2 and L3, we will not provide for enrichment in the L3 groups – at least not in the early years of the course, as students have a range of choices of languages here (any European language where more requested by at least 7 students). The same situation arises again in S4 with the choice of an L4.

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Basic proficiency levels in the different cycles

Basic proficiency levels in all modern languages according to the 'Common European Framework of Reference for Languages'

	Early education	Primary	Secondary Year 3	Secondary Year 5	Secondary Year 7
L2	0	A2	B1	B2	C1
L3	0	0	A1+	A2+	B1+
L4 advanced 4h	0	0	0	A1	A2+
L4 basic 2h	0	0	0	A1	A2
ONL (Other National Language)	A1.1 oral	A1.2	A2	B1	B2

Kind regards,

Brian GOGGINS
Director