

PRESS RELEASE

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HIGHDOWN SCHOOL & SIXTH FORM CENTRE SELECTED TO JOIN NATIONWIDE MANDARIN PROGRAMME

Highdown School and Sixth Form Centre in Emmer Green in Reading has been selected to participate in the Department for Education's national Mandarin Excellence Programme.

Now in its second year, the intensive language programme is being delivered by the UCL Institute of Education in partnership with the British Council and will see at least 5,000 school pupils in England on track towards fluency in Mandarin Chinese by 2020.

Pupils from Highdown School will start the programme alongside pupils from 22 other schools across England this term and will spend an average of eight hours per week studying Mandarin – a significant increase on the time pupils currently spend on the subject.

Progress test results from the 14 schools who have just completed the first year of the programme show that the Year 7 pupils' skills are developing at pace.

Rachel Cave, Headteacher said: Mandarin has been a part of our curriculum at Highdown for many years. It gives an opportunity for our students to have a skill not many young British people have and so a great advantage when going into the work place. The Excellence programme will enable Highdowners to be fluent by the end of the programme. It will be hard work but the opportunities for travel and cultural enrichment are superb. We are very excited about it.

Mandarin Chinese is the most widely spoken language in the world, and is seen as important for young people in the UK to master in order for the country to remain globally competitive in the future.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said: "Mandarin Chinese is an important language to learn in our globally competitive economy. I am pleased that this programme is continuing to grow, allowing more pupils to be taught Mandarin at an advanced level. I would like to congratulate the first cohort of students on their success. They have achieved some excellent results thanks to their hard work and dedication. This will give them a significant advantage when competing in the global jobs market, and is particularly important as we prepare to leave the European Union."

In addition to improving students' fluency in the language, the UCL Institute of Education, in collaboration with other providers, aims to have trained at least 100 new qualified Chinese teachers by the end of the programme.

The Confucius Institute, based at the UCL Institute of Education already has a network of 45 Confucius Classrooms across England and supports schools in starting and developing the teaching and learning of Mandarin Chinese and the study of China across other areas of the curriculum.

Katharine Carruthers, Director of the UCL Institute Of Education (IOE) Confucius Institute said: "The progress that learners have made after their first year participating in the Mandarin Excellence Programme is exceptional. The test results from the end of year one of the programme demonstrate

the success and the impact that it is having. This year we are delighted to welcome additional schools joining the programme which will ensure that more than 1,000 new learners across the country are given the opportunity to learn Chinese to such an advanced level.”

Mark Herbert, Head of Schools Programmes at the British Council said: “Mandarin Chinese is one of the languages that matters most to the UK’s prosperity – and its importance is only likely to increase as the UK repositions itself on the world stage.

“If the UK is to remain globally competitive, we need far more young people leaving school with a good grasp of Mandarin in order to successfully work abroad or for businesses here in the UK. More than that, learning Mandarin is a fascinating process which creates a connection to the amazing Chinese culture and over a billion Chinese speakers globally.”

State schools in England can apply to join the Mandarin Excellence Programme from 2018 with funding available to support successful delivery. As part of the programme, some pupils will have the chance to go to China from summer 2018.

More information about the programme and how to get involved can be found here:
<http://ci.ioe.ac.uk/mandarin-excellence-programme/>