



More than words

How to get your students to say yes to languages!

As students prepare to weigh up their GCSE choices, subject teams go head-to-head to win them over. Alicia Blainvillan from The Magna Carta School shares proven ways to get students saying yes to languages!

1. Make daily language reminders a part of school life

Gather four to six short quotes from GCSE students and display them everywhere: in assemblies, form-time slides, corridor posters and on your MFL stand. Prompts such as “Where I used French/Spanish outside class”, “What I enjoy about learning a language”, or “What surprised me when studying French/Spanish” help students identify with the subject. Real voices reduce anxiety and spark curiosity.

2. Show pathways at a glance

Create a simple, student-friendly visual that maps the journey from KS3 to GCSE to post-16, with two or three examples of trips, partnerships or careers your students recognise. Display it prominently and provide A5 copies for families. When the journey is clear, the destination feels achievable.

3. Celebrate heritage languages publicly

Invite one or two students who have completed a heritage GCSE to share a short story in class or via video. Many will also have chosen French or Spanish; hearing from peers reinforces pride, progress and possibility.

4. Engage parents with simple prompts

Send students home with a brief guide explaining how languages build confidence and transferable skills. Include two questions parents/carers can ask their children at home: “What can you already say?” and “Where would you use this next?”. Add a list of upcoming clubs, visits or taster events to give families clear next steps.

5. Brief form tutors for message consistency

Give tutors a short briefing and three key talking points so that everyone can explain the “humanity or language first” guidance confidently. Consistency across voices reinforces the whole-school belief.

6. Make MFL visible in high-traffic spaces

Refresh a corridor wall with photographs from theatre visits, MFL breakfasts, penfriend exchanges and European Day of Languages activity. Add short captions in the target language. These daily reminders help normalise languages as part of school life.

7. Offer micro-tasters

Provide two small, friendly activities: a quick cognates quiz and a 60-second “say hello + ask one question” challenge, with stickers or postcards as rewards. These low-pressure tasters turn passing interest into that important “I can do this” moment.

Creating a culture which inspires confidence and curiosity, where language lessons are seen as exciting, useful and achievable, and with clear messaging showing the benefits of languages beyond the school gates, you’ll have students putting that all important tick next to your subject.

Find out more at go.pearson.com/MFLGCSE24