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**A Journey through the Educational System in England: The Experience of
Teaching Spanish as a Modern Foreign Language Assistant**

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Abstract

All children In England between 5 and 16 years old are entitled to be educated. By law, all state schools in England are required to follow the National Curriculum, which supply with the significant knowledge that students need to be part of the British society.

The educational systems in England and Chile are divided into the same stages, preschool, primary, secondary, further and higher Education. In Chile, education is compulsory up to the age of 18 years old; in England the mandatory age is 16 years old. In both countries, students are required to wear uniforms, however in England is not necessary for sixth form students. In both countries, the school year is different, in Chile it goes from March to December and in England from September to July. In England the school year is divided into terms and in Chile it is divided into semesters.

One of the most important differences between these two educational systems is related to language learning, In England students must start learning foreign languages at year 7, when they are 12 years old. Even though in Chile, the compulsory age is a year before than in England, most school start teaching from preschool. Another difference is related to examinations, in England the results are important for the school and the students; in Chile the results are only relevant for the school.

Working as a Modern Foreign Language Assistant, I observed how students learned Spanish as a foreign language and tried to help them to acquire the language. As an overall experience, it helped me to understand both educational systems and compare language learning in both countries, which made me appreciate the way I was taught at university and made me realize the relevance of learning the culture of the language that students wanted to learn.

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Introduction

The present report describes the key features of the educational system in England, focusing mostly on the school system, especially early years, primary and secondary education, and school levels. It also includes the types of school, further education and higher education.

Initially, it concentrates on the National Curriculum in England, introducing its aims and structure, key stages, the school curriculum, examinations, and the programme of study for Modern Foreign Languages.

Additionally, this report takes into account the Educational System in Chile, focusing on types of Schools, levels of education and also a comparison of School levels in England and Chile.

Then, it describes the context of Magdalen College School, the British school where I worked for eight months, presenting its mission, school curriculum and its organisation. Finally, this report includes my experience as a Modern Foreign Language assistant, teaching Spanish as a foreign language to English teenage students.

Chapter I: Educational System in England

1. Overview

Education is compulsory in England for all children between 5 and 16 years old, including the children of foreign people. All children are entitled to start school after they turn five years old. Many children that are below the mandatory age attend pre-school or nurseries, at this level there is no curriculum provided by the government, although there is a set of useful learning outcomes. Some institutions, for example, pre-schools or nurseries offer a restricted number of free hours per day while others must be paid. After the age of 16, students can choose to go to Sixth Form or other further education institutions.

In England, the “Department for Education” and the “Department for Business, Innovation and Skills” are responsible for education. Besides in this country, there are Local Education Authorities that are in charge of providing education for state schools at a local level. These Departments introduced “The National Curriculum” in England in 1992, in which it was stipulated that all state schools must follow.

The education system in this country is divided into five levels: Early Years or Nursery, Primary Education, Secondary Education, Further Education and Higher Education or University.

In England, most state schools, primary and secondary, are co-educational or mixed, day schools, however, there are some schools that accept boarders. Private schools include day and boarding schools and may be single-sex or co-educational institutions.

1.1. The School year

The school year in England begins in September and ends in July and it is split into three terms. The first term is called “Autumn” and goes from September to December, the second term is the “Spring” term and runs from January to April and the last term is called “Summer” term and goes from April to July. Each term last around 12 weeks and there is a half term holiday in the middle of each one. Half term holidays are usually held in October, February and May. There are also Christmas and Easter holidays and they last around two weeks and the last break is the summer holiday that last around 6 weeks long.

2. Types of schools

2.1. State schools

State schools are those in which students pay no tuition fees. These types of school have to follow the National Curriculum. The British government establishes that the main state schools are:

- **Community schools**, which are administered by the local council and they are not commanded by religious organizations or commercial enterprises.
- **Foundation schools**, which are controlled by a governing body in charge of hiring the staff and have more freedom on the way they manage things.
- **Academies**, are run by a governing body, independent from the local council, they are allowed to follow a different curriculum than the National Curriculum.
- **Grammar schools**, can be run by the council, a foundation body or a trust, they select their students on the basis of academic ability and there is often an exam for admission.

2.2. Faith schools

These schools are characterized to be connected with a specific religion. These types of schools can be academies, private schools, free schools, etc. they are administer in the same way that a state school, which means that they have to follow the National Curriculum with the exception of the subject of Religious Education, in which they are allowed to only teach their own religion.

2.3. Free schools

These types of schools are financed by the government and can be sponsored by charities, universities, independent schools, community and faith groups, teachers, parents and businesses. They are characterized to be “all-ability schools” which means that they do not apply any kind of academic selection examinations and they do not have to follow the National Curriculum. Free schools have more control on the way they do things, for example, they can establish their own payment conditions for the school staff and modify the length of school terms and the school day.

According to the Department for Education, there are two types of free school:

- **University Technical Colleges**

These types of colleges specialise in subjects like engineering and construction. They can be sponsored by universities, employers, further education institutions, etc., in these colleges, students learn about academic subjects together with practical subjects in order to obtain technical qualifications. They teach these subjects along with business skills and using information technology. The Curriculum of these types of colleges is created by the university and employers, who are in charge of providing work experience for students.

- **Studio Schools**

These types of schools are characterized for providing realistic working situations along with teaching academic subjects. In these types of schools, students work with employers and a personal coach and follow a curriculum that it is designed to provide them with the skills and qualifications necessary for the world of work or to continue studying at a further education institution.

2.4. Academies

Academies are independent schools financed by the government. They are controlled by an academy trust, which is a charitable company that is in charge of hiring the school staff. Academies have to follow the same rules that state schools on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions, but they do not have to follow the national curriculum and can set their own school day and term times. These types of schools can also have sponsors like universities, businesses, faith organizations, etc.; these sponsors are in charge of improving the performance of their schools.

2.5. City technology colleges

These types of colleges are located in urban areas and students can attend without paying tuition fees. They are independent schools and are owned and financed by companies, not local councils. City technology colleges teach a wide and balanced curriculum in which they place great attention on science, technology, business understanding and arts technologies.

2.6. Private / Independent Schools

In England, these types of schools are also known as “public schools”. Private or independent schools are not required to follow the National Curriculum and they are financed by fees paid by parents rather than the government. These types of schools can be boarding schools or normal schools; they are free to manage and modify the school day and the holiday periods.

3. School Levels in England

The table below describes the most common patterns for schooling in England:

Age (Before School Year)	Year	Curriculum Stage	Schools		
3	Nursery	Foundation	Nursery School		
4	Reception	Stage	Infant school	Primary school	First school
5	Year 1	Key			
6	Year 2	Stage 1			
7	Year 3	Key Stage 2	Junior school		
8	Year 4				
9	Year 5				
10	Year 6				
11	Year 7	Key Stage 3	Secondary school	Secondary school with sixth form	Middle school
12	Year 8				
13	Year 9				
14	Year 10	Key Stage 4/ GCSE	College/ Sixth Form		Upper school or High school
15	Year 11				
16	Year 12	Sixth Form/ A Level			
17	Year 13				

In the British school system, the schools decide if a student passes from one school level to the following depending on the age of the student. In this country, students can skip or repeat a year under certain circumstances, for example a student can repeat a year as a consequence of a lack of attendance during a year in which a standardized examination is held.

4. The British School System

4.1. Early Years Education

Attendance at a nursery school for children under five is not compulsory. Early Years education takes place in a variety of settings including state nursery schools, nursery classes and reception classes within primary schools, as well as settings outside the state sector such as voluntary pre-schools and privately run nurseries.

This stage is not part of the National Curriculum; therefore the government presented the “Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)”, which sets standards for the learning, development and care of children up to 5 years old. The Department for Education establishes that the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements must be followed by all the institutions that provide this type of education, for example: state schools and independent schools, along with childminders, preschools, nurseries and school reception classes.

During this stage, children’s assessments are based on observations. The information that teachers get from these assessments is used by them to foster their students’ learning and development during this stage.

As stated in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Early Years Education focuses on seven areas that are split between prime and specific areas of learning. Prime areas of learning are: communication and language, physical development and personal, social and emotional development. The specific areas are: literacy, mathematics, understanding the world, expressive arts and design.

4.2. Primary School Education

According to Dunn and Collyer (n.d), Primary schools are attended by children from 4 to 11 years old. After Early Years Education, children can go to the “Reception Class” which is the first class that students can attend at primary schools. In England, some primary schools also offer nursery classes for children under the mandatory schooling age.

Most state schools in this country at this stage are co-educational, which means that the school accepts that students, male and female, work together in the same classroom. Children attending primary schools are assessed at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. During these stages a variety of subjects are taught and there are after school clubs, such as, sports, music and languages.

At primary education, there are compulsory subjects that must be taught to all students, these subjects are indicated on the National Curriculum. Students during this stage are tested at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, when they are 7 and 11 years old. These assessments cover core subjects like English, Mathematics and Science. Besides, at this stage education includes subjects like History, Geography, Technology, Music, Art, Physical Education and Religious Education.

- **School uniform**

Dunn and Collyer also state that many British schools have a uniform that all children are required to wear. Normally, the mandatory uniform for boy and girls consists of a grey skirt or trousers, shirt, sweater or sweatshirt, a blazer and school tie. In England, every school has its own school colours and they also require a uniform for Physical Education classes, which often consist of shorts with a PE T-shirt, and black or white trainers.

- **Students Reports**

According to Dunn and Collyer (n.d), at primary school, every school sends reports to parents at least once per year or at the end of each school term; these reports usually detail the students' progress. In England, it is also common that schools invite parents to attend "Parents Evenings" in which they can discuss the students' development on the lessons.

According to these authors, all schools in England must assess students at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The results obtained by the school are required to be submitted to the Department of Education, who is in charge of creating tables with the results of each school, in order that parents can compare the results of one school with another. Those tables are published in the newspapers once a year and are also available from the County Council or the Department of Education.

4.3. Secondary School Education

In England, secondary education is compulsory up to the end of year 11, after this year, students can choose to continue studying for another two years and enter to sixth form. There are five years of mandatory secondary education; these years are named from Year 7 to Year 11. At the end of Year 11, students take the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE); although a variety of other qualifications are available.

In accordance with Dunn and Collyer, all state secondary schools in England must follow the National Curriculum. When students start secondary schooling, they study a number of subjects until the end of Key Stage 3. At this stage, all students must follow the same curriculum, which includes the following subjects: English, Mathematics, Science (Physics, Chemistry and Biology), History, Geography, Languages, Information and Computer Technology (ICT), Religious Education, Physical Education, Music, Drama, Art, Design & Technology, and Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE).

In England, most state secondary schools, as primary schools, are co-educational, although some schools divide their students for academic subjects. The main types of secondary schools are:

- **Comprehensive Schools:** these types of schools offer education for students from 11 to 18 years old and they usually take students from the local area. They are characterized by their admission entry, because it is made without any reference to the ability or the aptitude of the students.
- **Secondary Modern Schools:** these types of schools are characterized for including a practical approach on their education. They provide education for students from 11 to 16 years old and like comprehensive schools, they accept students from the local area.

- **Secondary Grammar Schools:** these types of schools offer education for students from 11 to 16 or 18 years old. They are distinguished by their selective requirements on admission entry.
- **Technical Schools:** these types of schools offer an integrated vocational education, providing academic education along with technical education for students from 14 to 18 years old.
- **Sixth Form Colleges:** are schools where students from 16 to 18 years old that want to go to university, study for two years for The General Certificate of Education Advanced Levels or GCE A Levels.

When students reach the age of 16 years old, they can take the General Certificate of Secondary Education, also known as GCSE examinations or leave school without taking any exams. Many students choose to stay at school after these examinations for a further two years. Education for students from 16 to 18 years old, year 12 and 13, is called Sixth Form. Year 12 is known as the Lower Sixth and Year 13 as Upper Sixth. In year 12 students study for the “Advanced Subsidiary level exams” or AS levels; in this year students usually study 3 or 4 subjects. During Year 13, students take the “Advanced Level exams” or A levels, usually in 3 subjects.

In most state secondary schools in England, the size of a class varies; the common number of students per teacher in a school is around 22 students, however, there are schools in which teachers can have less than 15 students or over 30 in the same classroom. In this country, teachers normally work 22 to 26 hours a week in secondary schools, but there are some schools that increase these hours to get better exam results.

- **Subject options**

According to Dunn and Collyer (n.d), by the end of Year 9 of secondary schooling, students have to choose the subjects that they will continue studying during Year 10 and 11. Usually, all students make a selection among the subjects available and pick around 10 to study in more detail. There are three mandatory subjects, which are English, Mathematics and Science; the other subjects are selected by the students according to their interests. Most of these subjects are for the next two years, culminating in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) exams at the end of Year 11.

All subjects for the General Certificate of Secondary Education examination consist of a two year course, which implicate course work during both years and a final as written exams at the end of the second year.

At the end of Year 11, after GCSE's, some students choose to go on to Sixth Form, where they specialize further. At the end of the Sixth Form (Year 13), students leave school and are able to move on to the University system.

- **Students Report**

In accordance with Dunn and Collyer (n.d), at secondary education, as well as, primary education, schools in England send one school report to parents per term, focusing on the progress of the students.

In addition, parents are also invited to attend "Parent's Evenings" where they can discuss students' development with individual subject teachers. In England, Many secondary schools command a "Tutor system", in which the designated tutor is a teacher responsible for a group of students that attend the same year at school. The main role is to support students, create positive relationships and learning environments that promote respect and responsibility among students.

- **School Management**

Dunn and Collyer state that, at primary and secondary schools, the “Head Teacher” is the person in charge of the school. However, at a state school, the head teacher is supported by a governing body, which is composed of parents, teachers and members of the local community.

The school governors are responsible for financing, curriculum design, buildings, health and safety, special needs, among others. Their main role is to support the school, the staff, children and also parents. They are usually named and work for four years, the school must provide their names and addresses on the school website and in the annual report to parents.

5. Further Education

According to Dunn and Collyer (n.d), Further Education provides education for students over the age of 16. This type of instruction offers education that is more specialised than the compulsory education offered at secondary schools. Education at further education institutions includes Advanced levels, AS and A level exams, and some vocational qualifications. This type of education also offers education for students the age of 19 years old.

There are generally two types of college: Sixth form colleges, which are similar to schools and Colleges of further education, which usually offer a variety of subjects and also offer education for student over the age of 19 years old.

According to the Department for Education, further education colleges design their own study programmes. These programmes provide the necessary information about entry requirements and the purpose of courses. Colleges in England that are form part of the further education sector, include General Further Education (GFE) and sixth form colleges, Specialist colleges, for example, colleges of agriculture and horticulture and colleges of drama and dance, and also Adult education institutes.

The government establishes that further education courses may be provided in the school sector, for example in sixth form schools, or sixth forms within secondary schools. In England, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills is in charge of the Further Education Sector, although some parts of it, such as education and training for students from 14 to 19 year old, belong to the Department for Education.

6. Higher Education / University

After college or sixth-form, students can choose to go to University. Higher education is defined as courses that are of a standard that is higher than The General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (GCE A level). Higher education normally begins with a 3-year Bachelor's Degree, then continues with Postgraduate degrees that include Master's Degrees, that can be taught or by research, and comes to an end with Doctor of Philosophy, which is, a research degree that usually takes at least 3 years.

Dunn and Collyer state that university candidates apply through the Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS), which is a central clearinghouse, in which all the academic institutions providing any kind of degrees and higher education courses are members of. Candidates can apply for a maximum of 6 courses in different institutions. Applications must be completed in the last year of sixth form and they must be submitted with the marks obtained in the advanced levels.

According to the government, the main levels of Higher Education are:

- Postgraduate courses leading to higher degrees, diplomas and certificates (including Doctorate, Masters, Postgraduate certificates of education (PGCE) which usually require a first degree as entry requirement.
- Undergraduate courses which include first degrees (honours and ordinary), first degrees with qualified teacher status, and first degrees obtained concurrently with a diploma.

Chapter II: The British National Curriculum

1. The school curriculum in England

On the authority of the Department for Education, in England every state school must offer a curriculum which is balanced and broadly based and which:

- Promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of students at the school and of society, and
- Prepares them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.

The Department for Education (2013) establishes that the school curriculum must comprehend all the subjects and backgrounds that students need to learn and experience throughout the years of compulsory education. The National Curriculum must be included in every school curriculum, in which, it is presented the programmes of study and their subject contents for all the subjects that students have to learn at school. By law, all state schools are required to follow the National Curriculum and its programmes of study.

The Department for Education also states that all schools must publish their school curriculum by subject and academic year on their websites and they also must ensure to provide students with Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) "Religious Education" at every key stage and "Sex and Relationship Education" in secondary education. Some types of schools, such as academies and private schools are not required to follow the National Curriculum.

2. The National Curriculum in England

2.1. Aims

In accordance with the National Curriculum in England: Framework document (2013), the National Curriculum must ensure that all students will be taught to the essential knowledge that they need to be educated citizens. The National Curriculum aims to provide a guide for all schools and teachers in order that they are able to design lesson to foster the development of the skills, understanding and knowledge that the students need to be members of a community.

2.2. Structure

The Department for Education states that the National Curriculum is a set of subjects and standards that all state school should use at primary and secondary education, to ensure that all students learn the same subject contents. The National Curriculum is composed of four “Key Stages”, in which twelve subjects are introduced; these subjects are divided into “core” and “other foundation” subjects.

The Department for Education also establishes that the “Secretary of State for Education” is the responsible for publishing the “Programmes of Study” for each National Curriculum subject. In England, all state school must follow the contents of the National Curriculum programmes of study, but they are allowed to manage how they organise their subjects and the school day.

3. Key Stages

The national curriculum is organised into blocks of years called 'key stages' (KS). At the end of each key stage, students are assessed in order to know their level of achievement in each subject at school.

Age	Year	Key stage	Assessment
3 to 4	Nursery	Early years	
4 to 5	Reception	Early years	
5 to 6	Year 1	KS1	Phonics screening check
6 to 7	Year 2	KS1	Teacher assessments in English, Maths and Science
7 to 8	Year 3	KS2	
8 to 9	Year 4	KS2	
9 to 10	Year 5	KS2	
10 to 11	Year 6	KS2	National tests and teacher assessments in English, Maths and Science
11 to 12	Year 7	KS3	Teacher assessments
12 to 13	Year 8	KS3	Teacher assessments
13 to 14	Year 9	KS3	Teacher assessments
14 to 15	Year 10	KS4	Some children take GCSEs
15 to 16	Year 11	KS4	Most children take GCSEs or other national qualifications

According to the government, for each subject there is a 'programme of study', which describes what children should learn.

3.1. Key Stage 1 and 2

The Government establishes that the compulsory National Curriculum subjects at primary school are:

- English
- Maths
- Science
- Design and Technology
- History
- Geography
- Art and Design
- Music
- Physical Education (PE)
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Schools are also required to teach “Religious Education” (RE) to all students, however, it is possible for students to not participate in the class if they follow a different religion.

Schools often also teach:

- Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE)
- Citizenship
- Modern Foreign Languages

3.1.1. Tests and assessments

- **Key stage 1**

According to the Department of Education, Key stage 1 tasks and tests cover:

- Reading and Writing
- Speaking and Listening
- Maths and Science

Through this assessment teacher find out the level that students achieve in each area, they focus on the students' work, including spoken work and homework.

- **Key Stage 2**

Key stage 2 tests cover:

- English reading
- English grammar, punctuation and spelling
- Maths (including mental arithmetic)

At the end of this stage, teachers send reports to parents with the achievements of the students in those areas. The assessments are held by the end of May and the students obtain their results before the school year finishes in July.

3.2. Key Stage 3

In agreement with the government, the compulsory National Curriculum subjects are:

- English and Physical Education
- Maths and Science
- History and Geography
- Modern Foreign Languages
- Design and Technology
- Art and Design
- Music and Citizenship
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Schools are also required to provide Religious Education (RE) and Sex Education from key stage 3.

3.3. Key stage 4

During key stage 4 most students take national qualifications, usually GCSEs. The compulsory National Curriculum subjects are split into 'core' and 'foundation' subjects.

- Core subjects are: English, Maths and Science
- Foundation subjects are: Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Physical Education and Citizenship.

3.3.1. Key stage 4 entitlement areas

In England, there are four areas that are not mandatory in the National Curriculum after Key Stage 3, although, all students that attend state schools have a mandatory entitlement to be able to study at least a subject in each of the following areas.

- The Arts, comprehending Art and Design, Music, Dance, Drama and Media Arts.
- Design and Technology,
- The Humanities, including Geography and History.
- Modern Foreign Language

Other compulsory subjects are:

- Careers Education (Year 9 onwards)
- Sex and Relationships Education (Year 7 onwards)
- Religious Education (RE)

The Department for Education states that the structure of the national curriculum, in terms of which subjects are compulsory at each key stage, is set out in the table below:

	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4
Age	5-7	7-11	11-14	14-16
Year groups	1-2	3-6	7-9	10-11
Core subjects				
English	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mathematics	✓	✓	✓	✓
Science	✓	✓	✓	✓
Foundation subjects				
Art and Design	✓	✓	✓	
Citizenship			✓	✓
Computing	✓	✓	✓	✓
Design and Technology	✓	✓	✓	
Languages		✓	✓	
Geography	✓	✓	✓	
History	✓	✓	✓	
Music	✓	✓	✓	
Physical Education	✓	✓	✓	✓

4. Programme of Study for Languages

4.1. Purpose of Study

According to the National Curriculum Framework Document (2013), learning a foreign language helps students to express their ideas and thoughts in another language. It also fosters the curiosity of students and their perception of the world that surround them. Moreover, learning foreign languages allow students to learn about different cultures and provide opportunities to communicate in the language being studied.

4.2. Aims

The Department for Education establishes that the programme of study for languages aims to ensure that all students should:

- Understand and respond to spoken and written language from a diversity of realistic sources.
- Speak in the language with confidence, fluency and spontaneity, improving their pronunciation and intonation.
- Communicate ideas, thoughts and feelings, participating in discussion and asking questions.
- Write texts, for different purposes, using their knowledge on grammatical structures and vocabulary that they have learnt.

4.3. Subject content

4.3.1. Key stage 2: Foreign Language

As stated in the National Curriculum Framework Document (2013), learning a foreign language, modern or ancient, such as, French or Latin, must offer a suitable equilibrium between written and spoken language. Throughout this stage, the main focus is to provide students with the core contents that they need to understand and communicate ideas, facts and feelings in the target language. Students should communicate applying their knowledge on grammatical structures, pronunciation and vocabulary.

The Department for Education establish that the focus of study during this stage is on practical communication. Students should be taught to:

- Listen carefully to spoken language and prove understanding by participating in conversations
- Discover the patterns and sounds of the language through songs and rhymes, relating the spelling and sounds with the meaning of words.
- Ask and answer questions; express opinions and respond to others by asking for clarification and help.
- Speak in sentences, using familiar vocabulary, phrases and basic language structures
- Introduce ideas and information orally to others
- Read carefully and showing understanding of words and phrases
- Appreciate stories, songs, poems and rhymes in the language
- Write phrases and sentences from memory, and adapt them to create new pieces of writing to express ideas clearly
- Describe people, places, things and actions orally and in writing

- Comprehend basic grammar structures pertinent to the language being studied, including: feminine, masculine, neuter forms and the conjugation of verbs; key features and patterns of the language.

4.3.2. Key Stage 3: Modern Foreign Language

In accordance with the National Curriculum Framework Document (2013), Modern Foreign Language learning, such as French, German or Spanish, during this stage starts on the foundation knowledge set at key stage 2, whether students continue with the same language or take up a new one. This stage focuses on developing students' competence in listening, speaking, reading and writing, based on core grammatical structures and vocabulary. Students should be taught to:

Grammar and vocabulary

- Identify and apply tenses or other grammatical structures as suitable to the language being studied.
- Use and adapt a diversity of key structures and patterns, including voices and moods, as appropriate.
- Develop and employ vocabulary that goes further than their instant needs and interests, permitting them to provide justified opinions and take part in discussion about different topics.
- Use accurate grammar, spelling and punctuation.

Linguistic competence

- Listen to a variety of forms of spoken language to obtain information and respond appropriately.
- Transcribe words and short sentences that they hear with increasing accuracy.
- Express and develop ideas clearly, both orally and in writing.
- Speak coherently and confidently, with increasingly accurate pronunciation and intonation.
- Read and show comprehension of original and adapted materials from different sources, understanding the purpose, important ideas and provide an accurate English translation.
- Read literary texts in the language, such as stories, songs, poems and letters, to stimulate ideas, develop creative expression and expand understanding of the language and culture.
- Write texts using an increasingly wide range of grammar and vocabulary, write creatively to express their own ideas and opinions, and translate short written text accurately into the foreign language.

5. Examinations

The British Government states that they give great relevance on the need to assess and test students in order to know what they have achieved at mandatory education. In England, compulsory examinations and assessments take place at the end of Key Stage 1, 2 and 4, when students are seven, eleven and sixteen years old. In this country, all children in state schools are tested in English, Mathematics and Science at the end of Years 2 and 6. Most students take the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations at the end of Year 11. Students that continue on the educational system take Advanced levels examinations, advanced subsidiary (AS) and A levels, at Year 12 and 13.

5.1. National Curriculum Assessments

These types of assessments, also known as Standard Assessment Tests or SATs, they characterized for being a set of educational assessments that all students in England must take at the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2) and Key Stage 2 (Year 6). National Curriculum Assessments offer an outcome in terms of the level of attainment that each student should reach in every subject.

These assessments are useful for teachers, because they can learn more about their students' strengths and weaknesses in the subjects studied; they can compare and contrast the results to know how well each students is doing along with their classmates, both in their school and across the country. Teachers can also estimate the improvements that each student achieves from one Key Stage to another. In England, National Curriculum Assessment are mandatory for all students of seven and eleven year olds.

Children are tested on what they have been learning at school. SATs take place during May and results are available before the end of the school term in July. At the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2), students are assessed by their teachers on Speaking

and Listening, Reading and Writing, Maths (including number, shape, space and measurement), and Science. At the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6), teachers' assessments cover English and Maths. Students also have "sit in" exam conditions to take written tests in Reading, Writing (including handwriting and spelling), Maths and science.

5.2. GCSEs

GCSE stands for General Certificate of Secondary Education and offers a uniform framework for assessment. In England, GCSE examinations are taken by most students at the end of compulsory schooling (Year 11). The General Certificate of Secondary Education has a mark system that goes from A star (A*) to G, being A* the highest mark that students can obtain and G the lowest mark; students whose papers cannot be graded, receive as a result the letter U, which means "ungraded".

In secondary schools, GCSE courses are taken in a diversity of subjects, which are usually decided by the students themselves in Year 9. The study of chosen subjects begins at the start of Year 10, although some subjects start earlier, for example Maths, English and Science, mainly because these courses are too long to be taught within the traditional 2 years; final examinations are then taken at the end of Year 11.

Students taking the General Certificate of Secondary Education usually study between 8 up to 10 subjects, even though, it is acceptable that students choose more or less subjects than the mentioned above. All students must take GCSEs examinations in English, Mathematics and Science. In addition, many schools also require that students take "English literature", at least one "Modern Foreign Language", one "Design and Technology" subject, "Religious Education" and "Information and Communication Technology". Each GCSE subject is assessed by formal examinations or by coursework, or by a combination of the two.

Depending on grade that students want to achieve, in certain subjects they can choose to take the "higher" or the "foundation" tier GCSE exams. Which means that students expected to achieve grades A to D take the higher tier and can achieve any grade; those taking the foundation tier can only achieve grade C or below.

5.3. AS and A Levels

After GCSE examinations in Year 11, students choose to stay at school or go to college to complete their Advanced levels (A levels). In order to apply to university, most students complete their A Levels between 16 and 18 years old.

In England, these types of examinations were changed to the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Level, which is divided into advanced subsidiary (AS) in Year 12 and Advanced level, also called A2 in Year 13.

The General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Level, or A level, corresponds to a secondary school leaving qualification. A levels demand studying an offered A level subject for two years they are also characterized for having "sit in" examination at the end of each year.

During Year 12, students usually choose four AS Levels subject to study and in Year 13; they drop one of the subjects when they complete their Advanced Levels. AS Levels can be a qualification on their own or can be carried on to A2 the next year to complete the full Advanced Level qualification.

Students taking Advance levels are mainly assessed through coursework and written exams, these assessments are marked separately and then added together to show general mark of the year.

Chapter III: The Educational System in Chile

1. Overview

In the Republic of Chile, the Ministry of Education is the organisation in charge of Preschool, Primary Education and Secondary Education. The preschool level consists of two years of non-compulsory education for children from four to five years old. Primary Education is for students from 6 to 13 years old, and Secondary Education is for students from 14 to 18 years old.

The mission of the Ministry of Education is to ensure an equitable and quality education system that contributes to the integral training of the people and the country's development through the formulation and implementation of policies, standards and sector regulation. Since 1837, the Ministry of Education has been the institution in charge of education in Chile.

The main functions of the Ministry are:

- Propose and evaluate educational and cultural development policies
- Allocate public resources for cultural and educational activities
- Study and propose general rules for the sector
- Deliver official recognition to educational institutions
- Supervise the functioning of these institutions

In Chile, the school year starts in March and ends in December. In primary and secondary schools, all students are required to wear uniforms showing a badge that identifies the institution. The grading system has a 1 to 7 scale, being 1 the lowest and 7 the highest mark; students require 4.0 as a minimum passing grade.

2. Type of Schools

The educational system in Chile supply mandatory primary education for all students. This stage is divided into eight levels, from grades one through eight with another four years of secondary education. The system is composed of public, subsidized and private establishments. In this country, the educational system is divided into four levels, which are pre-school or early years education, elementary or primary, high school or secondary and higher education.

The main types of schools are:

- **Municipal:** (Public education) these types of schools are state-subsidized schools controlled by municipalities through their department of education, which also supply funding to the schools.
- **Particular Subvencionado:** (Private subsidized education) these types of schools are financed by private sources and through public funding or government subsidy.
- **Particular:** (Private education) these types of school are financed by tuitions fees paid by parents and private sources.

3. Levels of Education

The education system in Chile comprehends public and private institutions, and includes the following educational levels:

- Preschool (*Educación Parvularia*), which is attended by children up to 6 years old.
- Primary or Elementary school (*Educación Básica*), divided into eight grades.
- Secondary or High school (*Educación Media*), which consists of four grades and offers students a choice of two types of diplomas (the general science-

liberal arts diploma, or the vocational-technical diploma (which combines the general studies program with preparation for a job).

- Higher education (Educación Superior), which is received at universities, professional institutes, or technical centres.

4. The Chilean Educational System

Education	School/ Level	Grade from	Grade to	Age	years
Preschool	Educación Prebásica	Pre kinder	Kinder	4 - 6	2
Primary	Educación Básica	1°	8°	6 – 13	8
Secondary	Educación Media Científico-Humanista	1°	4°	13 – 18	4
	Técnico Profesional	1°	4°	13 – 18	4
Higher Education	Educación Superior			18 onwards	4 to 7

4.1. Early years or Preschool

In Chile, children can go to Preschool (*Prebásica* or *Parvulario*) up to the age of 6 years old. This stage is divided into three different levels; each level is divided into two levels. The first levels is called “*Sala Cuna*” or nursery and it is for children up to 2 years old. The second level is called “*Nivel Medio*” or middle level and is for children up to 4 years old and the last level is called “*Transición*” or transitional level and covers education for children from 4 to 6 years old.

4.2. Primary Education

Primary school Education is divided into two levels and each level is split into two different levels called “*Niveles Básicos*”. The first level (*primer nivel*) goes from years 1 to 4 and the second level (*segundo nivel*) goes from years 5 to 8. The Curriculum for Primary Education includes the following compulsory areas:

- Language and communication
- Foreign languages
- Mathematics
- Science
- History
- Geography and social sciences
- Technology
- Art
- Physical education
- Orientation and Religion

4.3. Secondary Education

After Primary Education students go to secondary school or *Enseñanza Media*, this stage is for students from 13 to 18 years old. At secondary education, in the first and second grades (*Primero y Segundo Medio*) all students study the same subjects. However, from the third grade of secondary education (*Tercero Medio*), students can choose between two paths to specialise their knowledge, which are sciences or humanities. Sciences include maths, physics, biology, and chemistry. Humanities include literature, philosophy and history.

Secondary school Education (*Enseñanza Media*) supply and prepare students with the core knowledge they need to go to university or the world of work. During the

four years of secondary education, the curriculum comprehends compulsory and optional subjects. At secondary school, the compulsory subjects are:

- Language and communication,
- Mathematics
- Science (physics, chemistry and biology)
- History
- Geography
- Social Science
- English
- Physical Education
- Visual or Musical Arts
- Technology, the first two years
- Philosophy and psychology, the last two years.

4.4. Vocational Education

In Chile, students can choose to attend technical secondary schools instead of normal secondary schools. These types of schools follow the same two initial years of education as the traditional schools; however, they provide training in practical subjects such as electricity, mechanics or metal assembly. In this country, there are industrial, commercial, technical or mixed training schools, the aim of these schools is to prepare their students with the core knowledge they need in order that they get better jobs offers after school.

4.5. Higher Education

After Secondary Education, students can choose to go to university, to work, or to study at a professional institute or technical centre.

In Chile, students have to take in their last year of high school, a national exam called "*Prueba de Selección Universitaria*" or "PSU" if they want to continue studying at university.

At the university level, students are divided into faculties and then by years. University students study for four or five years to get a degree, though, there are some degrees such as engineering, medicine or law that take more than seven years to obtain.

5. Comparison of School levels in England and Chile

The table below compares the patterns for schooling in England and Chile.

	Key Stage	England	Age of child	Chile	
Primary	1	Reception	4-5 years	Pre-kinder	Educación Prebásica
	1	Year 1	5-6 years	Kinder	
	1	Year 2	6-7 years	1° B	Educación Básica
	2	Year 3	7-8 years	2° B	
	2	Year 4	8-9 years	3° B	
	2	Year 5	9-10 years	4° B	
	2	Year 6	10-11 years	5° B	
Secondary	3	Year 7	11-12 years	6° B	
	3	Year 8	12-13 years	7° B	
	3	Year 9	13-14 years	8° B	
	4	Year 10	14-15 years	1° M	Educación Media Científico-Humanista/ Técnico Profesional
	4	Year 11	15-16 years	2° M	
Sixth Form	Lower Sixth	Year 12	16-17 years	3° M	
	Upper Sixth	Year 13	17-18 years	4° M	

6. Differences between the British and the Chilean Educational Systems

The educational systems in England and Chile are divided into the same stages, Early Years, Primary, Secondary, Further or Vocational and Higher Education. In Chile, education is compulsory up to the age of 18 years old; in England the mandatory age is 16. Chilean and British students are required to wear uniforms, however in England is not necessary for sixth form students.

In both countries, the school year is different, in Chile it goes from March to December and in England from September to July. In England the school year is divided into terms and in Chile is divided into semesters. Holidays are also different, in England each term has a half term holiday that last about a week, besides there are winter and Easter holidays within the school year, summer holidays last around 6 weeks. In our country, there are winter and spring holidays within the year and summer holidays last around 9 weeks.

One of the most important differences between these two educational systems is related to language learning, In England, French, German and Spanish are taught as foreign languages, in our country, only English is taught. In Chile, most school start teaching English as a foreign language from preschool and continue throughout the school levels, being a compulsory subject when students are 10 years old. In England, Spanish as a foreign language is taught when students reach the age of 14 years old and it is not a compulsory subject.

Another difference is related to examinations, in England students are tested when they are 7, 11 and 16 years old, in Chile students are assessed when they are 9, 13 and 16 years old. The main difference is that the results in England are important for the school and the students; in Chile the results are only relevant for the school.

The average of students per teacher in a classroom is also different, in England the normal size of a class is around 22 students per teacher, in Chile, the common size is 45 students per teacher. Also, the average of teaching hours in England is from 22 to 26 hours in secondary schools. In Chile, most teachers work 40 hours a week.

Concerning foreign language teaching, as I could see from my experience, teachers in England fall under the same mistakes that teachers in Chile that is to minimise the exposure to the target language and teach the subject in the students mother tongue, of course we cannot assume that this is a reality in every school in England or in Chile, but it is something that has been an issue to be addressed by Chilean authorities. In fact, nowadays there are several initiatives launched by the government such as the programme PIAP (*Programa Ingles Abre Puertas*) where they offer courses and scholarships to improve the English level of Chilean teachers.

Chapter IV: The School context at Magdalen College School

1. MCS

Magdalen College School is an Academy Trust co-educational comprehensive school and is one of three "ancient" Magdalen College Schools, the others colleges are located in Oxford and Lincolnshire. The school is situated in Brackley, South Northamptonshire, and has approximately 1.400 students. Magdalen College School is divided in two sites, the Secondary Modern site accommodates secondary schooling from Year seven to Year Eleven, after which students transfer to the Saint John's site for most of their lessons during the Sixth Form. It was established as a boys' grammar school, then a voluntary controlled comprehensive school, and was converted to academy status in January 2013.

- **School day**

At Magdalen College School, the School Day is divided into five lessons:

- 08:40 - 09:00 Tutor Time/ Assembly
- 09:00 - 10:00 Lesson 1
- 10:00 - 11:05 Lesson 2
- 11:05 - 11:25 Break
- 11:25 - 12:25 Lesson 3
- 12:25 - 13:30 Lesson 4
- 13:30 - 14:20 Lunch
- 14:20 - 15:20 Lesson 5

1.1. Mission

The mission of the school is to improve the lives of young people in the local area, to provide them with opportunities to develop as individuals and to prepare them for the life after school. To achieve this mission the school aims are:

- To permit students to achieve their full potential
- To be an outstanding school, where achievement of all students is outstanding.
- To enable students to be active and healthy, physically and mentally.
- To foster students' development as individuals and to prepared them for adult life.

1.2. Form Tutor

Members of Magdalen College School believe that it is very important for students' success that they become part of smaller groups within the school. For that reason, the school introduced the "Form Tutors" which are teachers who have daily contact with their students at Registration time and who:

- Gets to know individuals well,
- Help students deal with any problem,
- Maintains close links with home
- Monitors overall students' progress both academic and social.

2. Curriculum

As state in the curriculum policy at Magdalen College School, students in all years follow a broad and balanced curriculum which provides them with the highest backgrounds for continuing to higher education institutions or the world of work. The curriculum of the school is revised every year in order to ensure that the school develops new initiatives and makes decisions based on the needs of students.

2.1. Aims

Magdalen College School aims to:

- Provide a balanced curriculum which has progression routes at all levels
- Ensure that all students have access to the curriculum
- Supply opportunities for students to pursue interests and talents
- Carry out the requirements of Individual Education Plans
- Respond to government initiatives with a planned approach
- Provide a mix of traditional and vocational courses
- Be responsive to the changing needs of year groups and of individual students
- Enrich the curriculum outside the classroom through a range of experiences
- Fully involve students and parents in any choices made with respect to curriculum pathways.

2.2. Curriculum Organisation

2.2.1. Key Stage 3

In key stage 3, students follow a curriculum, which covers all subjects within the National Curriculum; the school promotes a number of cross-curricular projects which offer an original approach, linking skills and contents throughout a number of subject areas. Besides, students follow a work-based curriculum during tutor periods and whole school lessons that focus on the development of their personal learning and thinking skills.

- **Year 7**

The curriculum comprehends subjects such as, English, Drama, Maths, Art, Technology, Music, Physical Education, French, Information Technology, History and Creative Curriculum which covers Religious Education, Geography and Personal, Citizenship, Social, Health and Education (PCSHE). At Magdalen College Schools students are taught mostly in mixed ability groups although there is some setting in Maths.

- **Year 8 and 9**

Students follow a similar curriculum to year 7, however, the Creative Curriculum subjects of RE, Geography and PCSHE are taught separately. In Maths, English, Science and Information and Communication Technology students are taught in ability groups. In Year 9 students start their RE and ICT GCSE and in Languages they have the opportunity to choose from Spanish, French or German. At the school, throughout years 7 to 9 there is a “Learning to Learn” approach delivered through every lesson and in tutor periods.

2.2.2. Key Stage 4

In this stage, students follow a core curriculum which comprehends Science, Maths and English Language; most students also study English Literature, Religious Education (RE), Information and Communications Technology (ICT). Personal, Citizenship, Social, Health and Education is delivered through tutor periods, assemblies, lessons and extended learning days.

- **Year 10 and 11**

All students study English (Literature and Language), Maths, Science, Religious Education, Information and Communication Technology, Games and Personal, Citizenship, Social, Health and Education. Students at this stage can follow a “Triple Science” pathway or the “Double Award Science” GCSE. Students who follow the Triple Science pathway study a language and three additional subjects. Students studying for the Double Award are free to choose their subjects.

2.3. Sixth Form

Sixth Form students at Magdalen College School can choose from a broad variety of A Level courses which have been carefully selected to provide an extensive option of subjects and methods of education. During this stage, students can choose 3 or 4 A levels subjects, or can make a combination of Advance Subsidiary (AS levels) and Advanced levels. All students at the school are entitled to participate in an extended curriculum programme.

3. Pastoral Care

- **Students support services**

At Magdalen College School, the school provides a student support team that offers advice and help to students. This team deals with any kind of students' problems, from medical issues, general enquiries through to more specific needs for learning and development. The Magdalen students support services team is there to give support and help students throughout the school year.

- **Transition arrangements**

The school believes that the academic success of students depends on how quickly they adapt to a new school. For that reason, Magdalen College School provides transitions arrangements for all students that begin secondary education with them.

Students that transfer to the school are allowed to visit the school facilities and meet the staff before the beginning of the school year. Besides, the school invites them to participate in an "induction programme" in which they can meet and spend time with their Form Tutors and observe how lessons are taught in the school.

- **Parental Reports on Progress**

At Magdalen College School, Form Tutors are in charge of writing students' reports to parents once per term. The aims of these reports are to show the development of students at the school, they mainly focus on students' marks and engagement in their learning. At the school, parents are also invited to participate in "parents and tutor meetings" twice a year to discuss the progress of their children.

- **Behaviour for learning**

Magdalen College School believes that there is a clear connection between students' success and their behaviour. For that reason, the school expects that all students comport themselves well in their classroom, as well as, in break times in order that they achieve the best accomplishments during their time at school. During lessons students are required to work and not interrupt the learning of their classmates. The school functions on the basis that students make choices about their behaviour and that they take responsibility for their actions.

Magdalen College School places great importance to commitment and respect through the "House point system" reward, where students gain awards in recognition of all their achievements.

- **Special Education Needs**

At Magdalen College School, students with special educational needs have as much access to the curriculum as possible. The school provides a "Special Needs Department" that runs literacy and numeracy courses and coursework support groups in Key Stage 4. The school "Special Education Needs programme" at Magdalen includes:

- A comprehensive package of in-class support
- Provision for students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- Alternative courses at Key Stage 4 for students for whom the General Certificate of Secondary Education is not appropriate.

- **Attendance**

Members of Magdalen College School believe that there is a clear connection between students' success in school and their attendance. Therefore, It is important

that students attend school every day and only take time off school when they are too ill to attend.

4. Enrichment

At Magdalen College School, the school believes that there is more to life than just achieving academic qualifications. For that reason, the school foster all students to get involved at the school, make new friends and take advantage of the many opportunities that are available to them.

- **Extra-Curricular Activities**

These activities are part of the every day life at Magdalen College School; most of the students take part in at least one of the many clubs that meet regularly. Extra-Curricular activities comprise a broad variety of sports, music and creative activities, such as, extra-curricular week for Year 7 to 10, Sixth Form Study Trips, Sports Clubs, Chess Club, Art Club, Technology Clubs, Racing Car Club, Science Club, Chapel Choir, Jazz Bands, among others.

- **Educational visits**

The school carry out a wide diversity of visits in the UK and abroad. These visits include:

- Art trip to Rome or Venice
- History visit to Berlin
- Year 7 camp
- Year 8 Space Museum
- Cross-curricular World War 1 visit Ypres (Belgium).

- **Extended Learning Provision**

Through a number of off-timetable days and a designated week in the summer term students have the opportunity to participate in different activities designed to increase their learning beyond the classroom. These creative activities include:

- Dragons Den – Enterprise Day
- Opening Minds Day, Linking with the community
- Creativity in the Rainforest
- Forensics Day
- Alumni Day – learning from past MCS students.

- **House system**

At Magdalen College School, all students and member of the school staff belong to one of the 8 houses whose names have a historical relation to the school. The aims of the “house system” are to increase student’s motivation and encourage participation and commitment to all aspects of school life.

The houses are:

- Lovell
- Barnard
- De Quincey
- Holdgate
- Waynflete
- Beaumont
- Godwin
- Woodhams

At Magdalen College School, the inter-house competitions are designed to develop a variety of skills, promote team work throughout year groups and encourage all students to achieve their best for their house.

- **Head boy and Head Girl**

At Magdalen College School, students have the opportunity each year to vote for their Head Boy and Head Girl. The selection is based on contributions to school life and the school community. Their main role is to be ambassadors for other students and represent the school in the community.

- **Student Council**

The school has a “Student Council” that it is active in the life of the school. The council has representatives from all year groups and they create new initiatives and offer a valued contribution to the life of the school.

- **School Uniform**

Magdalen College School expects all students who attend school to wear uniform from Year 7 to 11. Sixth Form students are not required to wear it. The compulsory uniform for girls and boys consist of a black blazer with the Magdalen College School badge, plain black trousers for boys and plain black ‘A’ line skirt or trousers for girls, white revere collar blouse, short or long sleeve and white formal shirt with collar, respectively. It also includes plain black or white socks, black formal school shoes and the Magdalen College School tie for boys.

Chapter V: Working as a Modern Foreign Language Assistant at Magdalen College School

1. Modern Foreign Languages Department

Magdalen College School is a large coeducational comprehensive school with approximately 1400 students from 11 years old to 18 years old. The school is located in Brackley, a small market town in Northamptonshire, approximately 20 miles north of Oxford and 20 miles south of Northampton.

The school believes that learning a Modern Foreign Language correspond to a stimulating challenge for all students, because it promotes their curiosity of the world and it helps them to discover the culture of the target language. At Magdalen College School, French, German and Spanish are taught through the Department of Modern Foreign Languages.

At Magdalen College School, all students have to study French from Year 7 up until Year 9; French is a compulsory subject for students from 11 to 13 years old. During Year 9, students can choose to learn a new language apart from French that could be Spanish or German. And then they choose to continue with one or two modern foreign languages for the following years.

The school had approximately 180 students studying Spanish, 70 of them were studying Spanish at year 9, more than 100 students had taken Spanish as a subject for GCSEs, which consist of a two year course for students aged 14-16 years old (Year 10 and 11), and 4 students were studying at Advanced Level (aged 16-18).

The Languages Department had six full time members and three of them were teaching Spanish. Most of the teachers had to teach two modern foreign languages, but some of them were only teaching one language. The members of the Teaching Staff were Miss Helen Carmell, head of Modern Foreign Languages Department and

teacher of German and French, Miss Gurneet Chagger, teacher of French and Spanish, Miss Emily Fisher teacher of Advanced Spanish, Miss Julia Martini, teacher of French and Spanish, Miss Jane White, teacher of French, and Dr Helen Wolfenden, teacher of German and French. The Modern Foreign Languages Department also accepts trainee students from Oxford University.

Every year the school receives three foreign language assistants, for French, German and Spanish. The Modern Foreign Languages Department has been working with foreign language assistants for about 25 years. The school always employs assistants from France, Germany and Spain, but sometimes the Department also receives German assistants from Austria and Switzerland. Once they had a French speaking assistant from Reunion and last year they received a Spanish assistant from Chile.

The Foreign Language Department had an extensive range of both paper and e-resources that students could use to achieve their goals. The most important resources were “Linguascope” and “Vocab Express”. “Linguascope” was a website that had a lot of games and a wide variety of activities for speaking, listening, reading and writing to motivate the students. Vocab Express was a very effective software for exam preparation lessons because students had to frequently write and repeat words and it helped with vocabulary familiarisation and memorization.

2. Being Spanish language assistant at Magdalen College School

The school employed me as a Spanish assistant from 1st October 2013 until 31st May 2014, however, due to a strike action by some teachers and half term holidays, my actual period of appointment with the school was from 2nd October 2013 to 22nd May 2014.

My post at the school as language assistant involved working 12 hours a week, from Monday to Thursday, having one full day off a week, which was Friday. A normal school day for the assistants could be from 9.00 am until 3.20 pm. The school had a two week timetable; one week was called week A and the other week B. I had two timetables, one for the first three months and the other for the rest of the period. Even though, I was supposed to work 12 hours a week, in fact, I only worked around 10 hours during both weeks. This was due to some lessons that I did not have to do at the school, because of a lack of students' attendance and interest; those lessons were GCSE conversations and Spanish club.

At Magdalen College School, I worked with a range of students, from 13 years old to 18 years old. My main role as Spanish assistant was to support the class teachers with their lessons, taking small groups of students for speaking practice, and also delivering one-to-one tutorials with sixth form students to help them with their exam preparation.

I worked mainly with older students preparing them for Advanced Level and GCSE exams, in particular helping them to develop their spoken fluency in Spanish. I had individual lessons with the Advanced Level students once a week, where we covered the topics the students were learning in class. The main aim was practicing speaking and getting the students talking fluently.

During my period as language assistant at Magdalen College School, I worked with 180 students learning Spanish at different levels, I had three classes of year 11, two

of year 10, three classes of year 9 and I worked with four students of Sixth form, preparing for AS exams, and A2 levels.

2.1. Year 9: Spanish For The First Time

Year 9 is the first year that students can opt to start learning Spanish. The main aims and learning outcomes of this year were to make students think about the nature of learning Spanish, to learn that all nouns in Spanish have a specific gender, to introduce them to basic pronunciation rules and to be able to express opinions and preferences using verbs, such as, *gustar*, *encantar*, *odiar*, etc.

The topic focus and core vocabulary of this year included greetings, numbers, days of the week, months, classroom objects, time, colours, countries and nationalities, family, pets, school subjects, food and drink, hobbies, among others.

At Magdalen College School I had three classes of this level; my role in each class was to help students to complete the activities during the lessons and also to help them with key vocabulary. In one of those classes, I had to work with a student that suffered from attention deficit disorder. In every lesson I had to sit with him and make sure that he wrote down the vocabulary of the lesson and completed the activity sheets. I also had to encourage him to participate during the lessons.

2.2. Year 10 and 11: preparing students for Spanish GCSE

At Magdalen College School, students at the end of year 9 have to choose at least one modern foreign language to study for their GCSE exams. The Spanish GCSE preparation consist of a two year course for students aged 14 to 16, and it is based on control of assessments for writing and speaking, besides two sit in examinations which cover listening and reading. At the end of year 10 students achieve a 60 per cent of their final GCSE mark. For the listening and reading assessments, students had to choose between the foundation or the higher tier.

Students were expected to acquired knowledge and understanding of Spanish grammar during their course. They had to recognized gender, singular and plural forms, definite and indefinite articles, adjectives position, comparative and superlative, possessives, adverbs of time and place, quantifiers and intensifiers. They also had to identify regular and irregular verbs, all persons of the verb, negative forms, interrogative forms, uses of *ser* and *estar*. Besides, they had to apply tenses, like, present, present continuous, preterite, imperfect, immediate future, future, perfect and conditional.

For the control of assessment for writing, students had to write paragraphs about the topics that they were covering in the lessons, applying all the grammar structures that they had studied before and the vocabulary covered in the lessons. For each control of assessment they had to write five or six paragraphs about a certain topic, for example "Christmas holidays" or "*Las Vacaciones de Navidad*"; each paragraph covered certain aspects, for example, the first paragraph was about their last Christmas holiday, using past tense; the second paragraph was about accommodation, the third one was about the coming Christmas holiday, using near future (*voy a*), the forth one was about a future holiday, using future (*ire*). The fifth paragraph was about an ideal Holiday, using conditional tense (*iría*).

When students had their paragraphs finished, they had to memorize them, word by word for the control of assessment. Students were allowed to carry a 40 words sheet to help them during the assessment, in which they could write 40 words from their paragraphs, those words could be any word from their texts except conjugated verbs and whole sentences. For the speaking assessment, teachers had to record students saying one or two paragraphs by memory.

Spanish lessons were conducted in English, the three teachers that I worked with only used the target language, Spanish, to pronounce some words, sentences or read some paragraphs as example. In every lesson the teachers explain a grammatical aspect through a power point presentation, including core vocabulary for GCSE exams. The topics covered in class were holidays, neighbourhood, free time activities, sport and hobbies, home, food, school and jobs. The main activities that teachers presented were vocabulary sheets were the students had to translate words and sentences from English to Spanish or the other way round.

My role as the Spanish assistant was to support students during the lessons, helping them to complete the activities that teachers provided in every lesson. I solved vocabulary problems and asked questions about the topics. In addition, I had to test students on core vocabulary of Spanish GCSE exam, saying a word in Spanish and they had to provide the translation in English or saying sentences in English and they had to translate them into Spanish.

One of the main things that I had to do for GCSE students was to correct their written paragraphs and their pronunciation. In every lesson, I took students one by one or in groups of two or three and listened to them very carefully to correct their mistakes and improve their pronunciation. I also was in charge of the students from year 11 that were taking the higher tier for reading and listening assessment. Some time to time, I had to apply GCSE past papers to those students for them to practice for their exams.

2.3. Sixth Form

I worked with four students attending Sixth Form at Magdalen College School, two students from Year 12 and two from Year 13. They were studying for their A levels, AS and A2, respectively. For the Spanish advanced levels, students had chosen a topic at the beginning of the year and then they studied and learned about that topic. The students from year 12 had chosen healthy lifestyles and students from year 13 chose controversial topics. I had individual lessons with each student once a week, every week (A and B). Our speaking sessions lasted around 50 minutes or one hour. In those sessions we practiced the topics that they were studying in class, also covered grammar structures and checked pronunciation. For each lesson I had to fill a record sheet, in which I had to write the date, duration and location of our session, the topic covered, useful vocabulary, grammar structures, idioms learnt during the lesson, in addition, the areas of development and some comments on the progress of my students.

- **Year 12**

Students from Year 12 had chosen Healthy lifestyles as the main topic for that year, that topic also included subtopics like drugs, smoking, obesity, healthy and unhealthy diet, sports and extreme sports, alcohol, stress, skin cancer and sunbathing.

Our sessions were based on asking and answering questions about the topics, I usually asked a question to my students in Spanish, gave time to think and organized their ideas and then waited for their reply. While I listened to their answer, I was writing down the words that they mispronounced in order to correct and improved their pronunciation.

The level of my year 12 students was not good when we started our lessons; they did know core vocabulary about the topics, but they did not know how to express

their ideas in Spanish, therefore in most of the lessons I had to translate into English some of the questions and the correction of mistakes had to be in English.

During the last two months of my period at the school, we were working on a set of thirty questions that their teacher had given them to prepare for their AS oral examination. The set included questions for all the topics covered during the year; my students answered every question and then I corrected the mistakes and checked pronunciation. Once they had the whole set corrected, they started memorizing the answers for the examination.

Some of the questions that we practiced for the oral examination were the following: *En tu opinión, ¿por qué come la gente hoy en día tanta comida rápida?, ¿Estás a favor o en contra de fumar en lugares públicos?, En tu opinión ¿qué puede hacer la sociedad para disuadir a los jóvenes de que coman comida rápida?, ¿Crees que es importante practicar el deporte?, ¿Cómo podemos evitar el estrés?, ¿Por qué sufren tantas personas con el cáncer de piel?, ¿Qué relación existe entre el ejercicio físico y la salud? ¿Qué beneficios tiene llevar una vida sana?, ¿Qué piensas de la comida basura?, ¿Hay comida basura saludable?, among others.*

The most common mistakes of my two students were the use of “me” in English as I in Spanish, for example, they used to say “*me pienso que...*” instead of “*yo pienso que*” or just “*pienso que*”. They also changed the accents on some words, for example they said “*gustaría*” and “*rapída*”, instead of “*gustaría*” and “*rápida*”. Other mistake was the pronunciation of “me” in Spanish as “me” in English, in sentences like “*me parece que*” and “*me gustaría*”.

- **Year 13**

Students from year 13 had chosen “controversial topics” for their A2 level exams. That topic involved subtopics like euthanasia , abortion, globalisation, university fees, smoking ban, legalisation of drugs, bull fighting, immigration, death penalty, among others.

Our sessions were based on asking and answering questions about the topics. We also discussed and gave opinions in favour and against the topics. Besides, I corrected their pronunciation whenever possible. In addition, during our lessons we covered grammar structures that were necessary for their exams, for example: pluperfect tense, conditional and the subjunctive mood.

The level of my students of year 13 was very good, they were able to express themselves in the target language and also asked question about cultural aspects. One of them had lived in Spain for about five years, because of that she had a marked Spanish accent when she spoke.

For their A2 level examination, apart from an oral exam my students had to prepare a research based essay, in which they had to choose a city of Spain and investigate different aspects of the city, for example: social problems like homelessness, unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse, immigration and racism; they also had to look for festivals, important people, religion and environmental issues like recycling, pollution, traffic and important events in those cities.

For their oral exam, they had to choose one of the subtopics and then prepared a set of question about it. Some questions were in favour or against the topic and they had to develop them to debate about that topic. The topics that my students chose were euthanasia and death penalty.

Some oral questions that we practiced about euthanasia were: *¿Cómo afecta la eutanasia a la institución familiar?, ¿Desempeña la religión un papel importante en este asunto?, ¿Por qué está prohibido en Inglaterra si es un derecho humano básico?, ¿Cuáles son los principales argumentos que se emplean para promover la legalización de la eutanasia?, etc.* The questions about death penalty were: *¿Cuáles son los argumentos en contra de la pena de muerte?, ¿Qué opinas de los países que todavía aplican la pena de muerte?, ¿Te parece razonable matar a una persona por haber asesinado a otra?, Si tuvieses la oportunidad de cambiar la pena de muerte en otro tipo de sentencia o castigo ¿Por cuál lo harías?, Si fueses un juez, dependiendo de la situación y delito, ¿serías capaz de sentenciar a alguien a la pena de muerte?, En tu opinión, ¿crees que la frase "Vida por vida, ojo por ojo, diente por diente" tiene razón?, among others.*

Some of the mistakes made by my Year 13 students were the wrong use of the verbs *"ser and estar"*, for example, they said *"soy de acuerdo"* or *"soy en contra"* instead of *"estoy de acuerdo"* and *"estoy en contra"*. Other mistakes were related to literal translation, for example, they wrote *"la vista de muchas religiones"* instead of *"la vision de muchas religiones"*; they also wrote *"por otro mano"* (on the other hand) rather than *"por otro lado"* and *"es ilegal para visitar"* (it is illegal to visit) instead of *"es ilegal visitar"*.

Conclusion

Working as a modern foreign language assistant at Magdalen College School gave me the opportunity to experience the educational system in England for about eight months and also to work with teachers that, as me, were teaching a language that was not spoken in the country. This provided me a different point of view to understand the British educational system and contrasted it with our educational system in Chile and the different approaches to language teaching.

One of the things that I really appreciate of being the Spanish assistant at the school was that it allowed me to observe how teachers taught Spanish as a foreign language, how they prepared their lessons, the activities that they made, the learning strategies they used and compare and contrast them to everything I had learned about teaching at university, for example Spanish lessons were conducted in English. All the teachers I worked with used Spanish only a few times during each lesson; besides, the activities were all based on translation from English to Spanish or the other way round. In contrast with what students from teachers training programmes learn at university where it is of higher importance that students receive exposure to the target language specially from teachers.

Furthermore, as I mainly worked with GCSE students, all their lessons were about writing, correcting or memorizing their paragraphs for their exams. I noticed that this situation caused a certain rejection from the students towards the language and its culture. Most of the students were able to read in Spanish, but they could not understand basic Spanish.

Another aspect that I would like to point out is the mayor importance that the British system gave to the results in standardised examinations, specially the General Certificate of Secondary Education and the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level. Observing the Spanish lessons at the school, I realized that this obsession for getting good results on these examinations, damage the language

learning process of the students, because it affects the way lessons are designed and conducted focusing only on the contents that the students need to obtain good results in the tests. This obsession also had some negative consequences for teachers; some of them were the reduction of the teachers' salaries if they did not reach the results that the school expected and the difficulties to find jobs if teachers had not worked with students taking standardised examinations.

I also would like to mention an important feature which I think that makes a difference between the foreign language teaching in our country and in England, is the way in which we as language teachers deal with the culture of the language being studied. For me, culture is one of the most important things when we learn a language, because through it students can develop an appreciation of cultural diversity and open their minds to different realities.

I noticed that this aspect was not taken into account in the Spanish lessons at Magdalen college school, maybe because this was out of the topics addressed in standardised examinations therefore, it was not important to be seen in the lessons. In our country is different, because the culture of the language helps teachers to motivate their students to study the language, to make them want to know more about it and to be interested in what they learn in order to use the language to communicate their ideas and thoughts.

Ultimately the most important benefits of the experience of working in a British school, as a Spanish assistant were the opportunity to live and work in a different country, to get to know its culture and lifestyles while you improve your English through the communication with native speakers. Moreover, this was an enriching experience, because it allowed me to grow as a person and also to pave my path as a future teacher of English as a foreign language.

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Appendices

1. Timetables at MCS

A Week

	Period	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs
8. 40 - 9.00	Registration				
9.00 - 10.00	1	Kiera (Year 12)	Year 11B (JM)	Year 11A (GTC)	
10.00 - 11.05	2				
11.25 - 12.25	3	Year 11A (GTC)		Year 11B (GTC)	
12.25 - 1.30	4		Year 10B (JM)	Leah (year 13)	Phoebe (year 13)
1.30 - 2.20	Lunch	Sophie (year 12)	GCSE conversation Year 10 (JM)	GCSE conversation Year 10 (EJF)	
2.20 - 3.20	5			Year 10B (JM)	Year 11B (JM)

B Week

	Period	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs
8. 40 - 9.00	Registration				
9.00 - 10.00	1		Kiera (Year 12)	Year 10B (JM)	
10.00 - 11.05	2		Phoebe (Year 13)		
11.25 - 12.25	3	Year 11B (GTC)			
12.25 - 1.30	4		Leah (Year 13)		Year 11 ^a (GTC)
1.30 - 2.20	Lunch	GCSE conversation Year 11 (JM)	Year 9 Spanish Club		GCSE conversation Year 11 (GTC)
2.20 - 3.20	5	Sophie (year 12)	Year 11A (GTC)		

A Week

	Period	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs
8.40 - 9.00	Registration				
9.00 - 10.00	1	Kiera (Year 12)			
10.00 - 11.05	2				
11.25 - 12.25	3	Year 11A (GTC)	Year 9G (GTC)	Year 11B (GTC)	
12.25 - 1.30	4		Year 10B (EJF)	Leah (year 13)	Phoebe (year 13)
1.30 - 2.20	Lunch	Sophie (year 12)			GCSE conversation Year 11 (JM)
2.20 - 3.20	5				Year 11B (JM)

B Week

	Period	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs
8.40 - 9.00	Registration				
9.00 - 10.00	1		Kiera (Year 12)	Year 10B (JM)	
10.00 - 11.05	2		Phoebe (Year 13)	Year 9G (JM)	
11.25 - 12.25	3	Year 11B (GTC)			
12.25 - 1.30	4	Year 9F (GTC)	Leah (Year 13)		Year 11A (GTC)
1.30 - 2.20	Lunch	GCSE conversation Year 10 (JM)	Year 9 Spanish Club		GCSE conversation Year 11 (GTC)
2.20 - 3.20	5	Sophie (year 12)			

2. Example of activity for Year 11

SCHOOL/COLLEGE & FUTURE PLANS:			
El acento		La actividad	
El alemán		El/La alumno/a	
El apoyo		Los apuntes	
El arte dramático		La asignatura	
El aula (f)		Ausente	
La ayuda		El bachillerato elemental	
El bachillerato superior		La biología	
El bolígrafo/boli		La calculadora	
El campo de deportes		La cantina	
El castigo		El chicle	
Las ciencias económicas		Las ciencias	
La clase		La cocina	
El colegio		El comercio	
El comportamiento		La conducta	
El consejo		El cuaderno	
El curso		Los deberes	
Desobediente		El detalle	
El dibujo		El diccionario	
El director		Diseñar	
La educación física		La escuela	
El español		Estricto/a	
El estuche		El estudiante	
Los estudios		El examen	
El éxito		Femenino/a	
La física		Físico/a	
El fracas		La geografía	
La gymnasia		El gimnasio	
La goma		La historia	
El idioma		La informática	
El inglés		Insolente	
Las instalaciones		El instituto	
El intercambio		El laboratorio	
Los lápices de colores		El lápiz	
La lección		La lengua	
La letra		La libertad	
El libro		La literatura	
Masculino/a		Las matemáticas	
Mixto/a		La mochila	
El nivel		La nota	
Obligatorio/a		La opción	
La oportunidad		Optar	

3. Example of a lesson for Year 11

Where do you recommend ?

Yo recomiendo ... porque ..es un lugar magnifico

hay mucho que hacer

el tiempo es fenomenal

la gente es muy amable

hay playas con arena blanca
y muchos hoteles

Where is it?

- ... está situado en...
 - el norte de España
 - el sur de Francia
 - el este de América
 - el oeste de Grecia
- ... es una ciudad española, al lado de la costa
- ... es un pueblo pequeño, cerca de ...
e.g. *Torrox es un pueblo pequeño, cerca de Málaga*

How you get there?

- Se puede ir en avión, tren o barco
- No se puede ir en coche porque es demasiado lejos.

Say what you can do there

- Para los jóvenes/adultos/jubilados hay muchas cosas que hacer.
- Por ejemplo..... hay fiestas en agosto
 - hay un parque temático
 - se puede ir a la playa
 - se puede hacer excursiones
 - hay montones de discotecas
 - se puede probar la comida local
 - se puede hacer el buceo
 - se puede jugar al vólibol

What you can do in different weather

- Cuando hace sol.....
 - se puede ir a la playa.
 - se puede nadar en la piscina.
 - se puede hacer la vela.
 - se puede ir al mercadillo.
 - se puede ir de paseo.

What you can do in different weather

- Cuando hace mal tiempo.....
 - se puede ir al castillo
 - se puede visitar la iglesia famosa
 - se puede ir de compras en el centro comercial

4. Example of Spanish GCSE Foundation and Higher Tiers

Centre Number		Candidate Number	
Surname			
Other Names			
Candidate Signature			

AQA General Certificate of Secondary Education
Foundation Tier
January 2011

Spanish

46952F

Unit 2 Reading

Wednesday 12 January 2011 9.00 am to 9.30 am

You will need no other materials.

Time allowed

- 30 minutes

Instructions

- Use black ink or black ball-point pen.
- Fill in the boxes at the top of this page.
- Answer all questions.
- You must answer the questions in the spaces provided. Do not write outside the box around each page or on blank pages.
- Answer the questions in English.
- Do all rough work in this answer book. Cross through any work you do not want to be marked.

Information

- The marks for questions are shown in brackets.
- The maximum mark for this paper is 35.
- You must **not** use a dictionary.


For Examiner's Use	
Examiner's Initials	
Page	Mark
2/3	
4/5	
6/7	
8/9	
10/11	
12/13	
14/15	
TOTAL	

2

Dr

Answer all questions in English.

1 You are going camping in Spain.

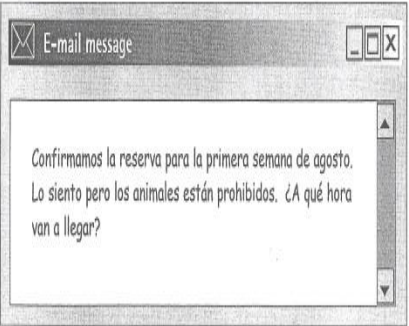


Camping La Playa

What is the campsite called in English?

.....
(1 mark)

2 An e-mail about your reservation for 4 people and your dog for 7 nights



E-mail message

Confirmamos la reserva para la primera semana de agosto.
Lo siento pero los animales están prohibidos. ¿A qué hora van a llegar?

2 (a) What problem will you have at this campsite?

.....
(1 mark)

2 (b) What does the campsite want to know?

.....
(1 mark)

Centre Number		Candidate Number	
Surname			
Other Names			
Candidate Signature			

AQA General Certificate of Secondary Education
Higher Tier
January 2011

Spanish

46952H

Unit 2 Reading

Wednesday 12 January 2011 9.00 am to 9.50 am

H

You will need no other materials.

Time allowed

- 50 minutes

Instructions

- Use black ink or black ball-point pen.
- Fill in the boxes at the top of this page.
- Answer all questions.
- You must answer the questions in the spaces provided. Do not write outside the box around each page or on blank pages.
- Answer the questions in English.
- Do all rough work in this answer book. Cross through any work you do not want to be marked.

Information

- The marks for questions are shown in brackets.
- The maximum mark for this paper is 45.
- You must not use a dictionary.

For Examiner's Use	
Examiner's Initials	
Page	Mark
2/3	
4/5	
6/7	
8/9	
10/11	
12/13	
14/15	
16/17	
18/19	
20/21	
22/23	
24	
TOTAL	

2

Do not write
outside the
box

Answer all questions in English.

- 1 You decide to go online to read some reviews of a campsite.

Internet Explorer

(a) Para mí, el Camping La Playa es demasiado tranquilo. Necesita más actividades divertidas.
Nuria

(b) Hay poca sombra en el Camping La Playa. ¡Qué pena! Tiene unas instalaciones superlimpias.
Pepe

(c) En el Camping La Playa siempre hay algo que hacer. No hay nada malo.
Antonio

(d) El Camping La Playa no es ni caro ni ruidoso. Es genial.
Carmen

What kind of review do these people give of the campsite?

Write P (Positive)
N (Negative)
P+N (Positive and Negative)

- 1 (a) Nuria (1 mark)
- 1 (b) Pepe (1 mark)
- 1 (c) Antonio (1 mark)
- 1 (d) Carmen (1 mark)

5. Lesson Record Sheet

Foreign Language Assistant Lesson Record Sheet: Spanish

Date	Duration	Location

Oral Topics Covered:

Useful vocabulary/structures/idioms learnt:

(continue overleaf)

Areas for development:

FLA Comment on student progress:

FLA signature:

Student signature: