

News story: Hundreds of pupils on track towards fluency in Mandarin

Almost 400 pupils from 14 schools across England have been praised by Nick Gibb for their progress in learning Mandarin, as part of a pilot programme to help them get ahead in the global jobs market.

The Mandarin Excellence Programme, delivered by the UCL Institute of Education in partnership with the British Council, aims to have at least 5,000 pupils in England on track towards fluency in Mandarin Chinese by 2020.

The first cohort of children have completed the first year of the programme and over 380 pupils achieved more than 80% in specially-created tests in reading, writing, listening and speaking, demonstrating their quick progress and commitment.

This year, an additional 23 schools throughout England have entered into the Mandarin Excellence Programme, meaning hundreds more pupils will soon have the opportunity to learn this advanced skill.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

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

Pupils on the programme spend an average of eight hours per week studying the language.

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

Katharine Carruthers, Director of the UCL Institute Of Education (IOE) Confucius Institute, who deliver the training, said:

The progress that learners have made after their first year participating in the Mandarin Excellence Programme is exceptional. The test results from the end of year one of the programme demonstrate the success and the impact that it is having. This year we are delighted to welcome additional schools joining the programme which will ensure that more than 1,000 new learners

across the country are given the opportunity to learn Chinese to such an advanced level.

Mark Herbert, Head of Schools Programmes at the British Council said:

Mandarin Chinese is one of the languages that matters most to the UK's prosperity – and its importance is only likely to increase as the UK repositions itself on the world stage.

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

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

More information about the programme and how to get involved can be found [here](#).