

Bristol University Language Festival, June 2025

As part of Widening Participation, the School of Modern Languages at University of Bristol organised a one-day Language Festival for Year 8 pupils at a critical moment in their education before Options in Year 9.

We welcomed 50 pupils from four different local state schools who each attended two workshops in different languages: Spanish, Italian, Czech, French and German, and a lecture in linguistics with James Hawkey who added in some Portuguese abstracts and mentioned Catalan too!



We had a really good discussion at the end of the day about what studying modern languages at university entails. Pupils also asked some great questions to our student ambassadors who assisted throughout the day too. For many of our young guests, it was their first time stepping into a campus.

We received some wonderful feedback from pupils:

#Pupils loved learning new languages: especially Italian, Czech, and German.
#They enjoyed new aspects of language learning particularly cultural and linguistic insight: history, word origins, and how languages work.
#Many students praised the student ambassadors as friendly, kind, and helpful.
<i>"The lecture on linguistics was very good. The trip was very well planned and engaging."</i>
<i>"The staff were really nice and inclusive. And also there was a variety of fun activities."</i>
<i>"I loved learning and having a go at some of the new languages I haven't learned before."</i>

Among the pupils who filled in the feedback form, there was a clear willingness to continue Languages After Y9:

- *Yes, definitely!:* 20 students
- *Maybe:* 20 students

Maintaining links with secondary schools through other avenues is crucial for us, and the day also served to identify potential ways we can continue working with schools to enhance language retention activities, and build bridges into the future.