

Classics Hub

How to set up a Classics club at your school

You may be wondering whether to set up a Classics club at your school, or you may already have decided you want to, and need some advice on how to go about it. Here, we explain what benefits a Classics club can bring to your school and students, set out some key considerations, and point you towards resources and sources of help for setting up and running your club.

The benefits

You might be wondering - why Classics? Given there are already so many challenges and pressures facing schools, making an effort to engage with the ancient world might seem like a bit of a stretch. But there are actually many ways in which Classical subjects can benefit everyone at your school. Here are just a few...

Cultural awareness: Ideas, stories and mythology from the ancient world have had a considerable influence on much modern art and literature, and classical ideas are constantly being reworked in theatre and in the visual arts, film and pop-culture. A Classics club can introduce students to these ideas and support richer engagement with the world around them.

Resource: The [Classic Tales](#) website offers free audio files and teaching resources covering stories from Aesop's *Fables*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, suitable for both KS2 and KS3 students.

Cross-curricular thinking: Classics is a subject that covers a lot of different areas. The study of Latin, Classical Greek, Classical Civilisation and Ancient History can involve literature, language, history, philosophy, the visual arts, and much, much more. That means it's a great way of encouraging students to think across subject boundaries and to knit together their knowledge and understanding in a cross-curricular way. Studying the ancient world and its languages can support other curriculum subjects by helping to build critical thinking skills, contextual knowledge and independent research abilities. There are strong cross-curricular links in particular with English, Modern Languages, Sciences, History, Geography, Art and D&T.

Insight into contemporary issues: By reading original texts and studying material culture, students can gain fascinating insight into the ancient world through the words and actions of people who actually lived at the time. However, there is also much in the ancient world that speaks to contemporary issues such as those around sex and gender, race, class, and social mobility.

Resource: [Amarantus](#) is a new course from the Cambridge Schools Classics Project that tells the story of life in Pompeii before the eruption of Vesuvius, using archaeological evidence. These materials are specifically aimed at KS3 and provide clear links to terminology and concepts necessary for GCSE History or Ancient History. They are also intended to be useful for KS3 Classics.

Improving literacy: Learning Latin and Classical Greek is especially helpful for boosting literacy at all levels, increasing students' vocabulary, and supporting modern language-learning, because it introduces students to key grammatical concepts as well as to words that provide roots for a lot of vocabulary in English and in other European languages such as Spanish, French and German. Teachers have told us that learning ancient languages in particular can help students of all abilities with other areas of the curriculum.

Resource: [Word Roots](#) - free resources that aim to teach students about the Latin and Greek roots of English words. A good way to introduce students to ancient languages while also helping boost their vocabulary. Suitable for KS2 and KS3.

Some things to consider...

There are lots of options for how your club can work, depending on your school's context and what you want the club to achieve for your school and students. Here are some of the key things you might want to consider.

What your school wants to achieve: Think about what you want to get out of your Classics club. Do you want to find an interesting and engaging way to enrich your existing curriculum? Are you looking to engage students with particular interests or needs? Or do you want your Classics club to prepare the ground for GCSEs in Latin, Classical Greek, Classical Civilisation or Ancient History? Perhaps a combination of the above. It's worth considering this up-front, as the answer will determine the focus of your club and who you're aiming it at.

Which students you're targeting: How you design your club will depend on which students you're looking to engage. Some schools use Classics clubs as a way to provide additional enrichment for students who are already high academic achievers, while others have found it a great way to engage students who are struggling with literacy or have low levels of engagement generally. Because Classics is such a wide-ranging subject, there really is something in it for everyone, so you can tailor your club to whatever you think will appeal most to your students, and suit their abilities and your school's aims.

Activity ideas:

- If you've got some avid storytellers, why not try introducing them to ancient Greek myth?
- If you've got some budding sports stars in your group, why not run a session on ancient military tactics or the ancient Olympic games?
- If your school is looking to boost literacy, why not try a few sessions on Greek and Latin word roots as a way to help students to break down and understand new words?

Who will deliver the club and their knowledge and skills: If you're running a Classics club, you definitely don't need to have studied Classics or ancient languages before! There are plenty of brilliant resources designed for teachers who have no subject specialist knowledge, such as [Maximum Classics](#) and [Amarantus](#). The only requirement is your interest and enthusiasm for the subject... because it's more likely students will enjoy it if you're having fun, too!

How to get staff, students and parents on board: Getting staff, parents and - most of all - your students excited about your Classics club is key to its success. You could generate a buzz around the new Classics club by:

- Running an assembly on an element of the ancient world which has broad appeal, to give students a taste of what *they* could discover!
- Running a taster event for parents and students, with activities such as:
 - mosaic-making,
 - dressing up,
 - making or trying foods based on Greek and Roman diets,
 - ancient Olympic sports like javelin and discus-throwing.

It's entirely up to you and your imagination!

Possible pathways

There are loads of possible paths your club could take, depending on what you need it to do for you. We've broken them down into three broad pathways:

1. Language: introducing students to a classical language is a great way to boost literacy and improve students' linguistic confidence. Latin, especially, has been proven to help students get to grips with English vocab and grammar and to support modern language-learning. Some foundational language learning via a Classics club might also act as a pathway to Latin GCSE (or even Classical Greek GCSE), if that's something your school offers or is thinking of offering.

Resources: You could try [Maximum Classics](#) for Latin at KS2 and KS3 – a free online course which has been designed for use by non-specialist teachers – the [Minimus](#) course for primary level Latin, or the [Cambridge Latin Course](#), which offers a teaching pathway to GCSE Latin. [Classics for All](#) has a 10-week short course based on the first book of the Cambridge Latin Course that works as an introduction.

2. Cultural / historical: learning about the history and culture of the ancient world encourages students to think about what's changed and what's stayed the same over the past couple of millennia, reflecting on some of the issues and dilemmas we still face today. This option could provide a pathway to GCSEs in Classical Civilisation or Ancient History.

Resources: There are plenty of resources suitable for KS3 History, including [Amarantus](#) and [Priam](#), an Ancient History Hub and Knowledge base offering images, texts and archaeological finds for teaching Ancient History. You can also find ready-made KS3 modules on Classical Civilisation and the ancient world in the resources section of the [Classics for All](#) website.

3. Mix 'n' match: that said - why limit yourself!? Your club can do whatever you want it to do, so you may wish to spend one term focused on language, another on classical mythology, and another on ancient history... or mix it up every week!

Here at the [Bristol Classics Hub](#), we offer a free Classics club consultation service to help design workplans to suit the needs and interests of every school, so please don't hesitate to get in touch if this is something you'd like to discuss.

Your questions answered

Are Latin and Classical Greek only for ‘high achievers’? Not at all!

Contrary to popular belief, ancient languages can be taught in ways that are accessible to all pupils. While Latin and Greek can stretch and challenge the most able pupils, recent research by the University of Oxford indicates that learning these languages can also have a significant positive effect on the literacy skills of those children performing *below* age-related expectations. Their initial research findings suggest a strong positive correlation between the learning of Latin and the development of literacy skills at KS2. Latin and Classical Greek provide a structure around which all learners (including those with English as an additional language) can build up a clearer understanding of the way languages work.

I work in a primary school - aren't our students too young for Classics?

Classics is for everyone, no matter what age! In fact, the National Curriculum programme of study for languages at KS2 specifically says that ancient languages are suitable for study and can be taught alongside or instead of a modern language. It adds that ‘A linguistic foundation in ancient languages may support the study of modern languages at key stage 3.’ Both primary and secondary schools have had success running Classics clubs, and there are plenty of ready-made materials you can use aimed at both older and younger students.

Resource: [Literacy through Classics](#), designed by Classics students and staff at Swansea University, offers some fantastic resources for primary schools on Latin, Greek, the Romans and the Celts.

How do I make sure it's sustainable? If the staff member running the club leaves the school – don't panic! There are plenty of ready-made resources and materials for a new club organiser to pick up and run with. That said, you might find it helpful to have at least two staff members involved from the start, perhaps taking it in turns to run sessions, so that there's some continuity if a handover needs to happen.

Advice, support and resources

Now you're ready to get going with your Classics Club! Here at the **Bristol Classics Hub** we offer free advice, support, and - of course - resources, to get you started on your journey. Head to our website where you'll find links to a range of primary and secondary resources, or email us to get in touch.

Head to <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/classics/hub/> or email the Hub at classics-hub@bristol.ac.uk, to find out more.