



Bilingualism and Languages at Le Rosey

The 21st century is multilingual – and multicultural

For much of the twentieth century it seemed possible that English could become the world language. It is now clear that we are moving into a multi-polar and multi-lingual world – a world where English looks set to remain the lingua franca but where being able to speak and write in only one language is no longer enough. But speaking and writing are only half the story. Behind different languages lie different ways of thinking and different cultures. Being international means opening your mind to other ways of seeing the world. And young people are uniquely privileged to learn these skills and aptitudes as a fundamental part of their education. “International Education” is therefore much more than English-speaking schooling in a British or American tradition.

Institut Le Rosey, une école suisse à vocation internationale, has a claim to being the most international boarding school in the world.


Le Rosey is first and foremost a uniquely international community:

- 430 students and 200 teachers and staff from all over the world live together
- well over 60 nations are represented on campus
- a quota system guarantees that no more than 10% come from a single country.

This creates an extraordinary and egalitarian mix of languages, cultures, ethical backgrounds and religions. And there can be no more appropriate home for an international community than Switzerland, a peaceful, polyglot country and a democracy for over 700 years and with a long-standing commitment to international understanding and multilingualism.



LE ROSEY

■ ■ Le Rosey: a bilingual (or “dual language”) school 

Most students arrive at Le Rosey with a very good level of either English or French, and effectively all are able to follow classes in at least one of Rosey’s two principal languages of instruction.

Le Rosey’s bilingual system takes care of the rest:

1. French or English becomes students’ “L1”, their main language of instruction for all the typical subjects of the curriculum – History, Biology, Mathematics, etc.
2. All students also have English and French language classes at an appropriate level: mother-tongue classes for native-speakers and intermediate or beginner-level classes for others.
3. As soon as they are ready – and this is often immediately – students begin to study at least one of their subjects in their “other” language. So, with advice and guidance, a student whose L1 is English might study one subject or even half of the curriculum in French. Students who follow a totally bilingual programme will receive a Rosey bilingual diploma in Class 2.

This learning in the foreign language, sometimes called CBI (Content-based Instruction), is at the heart of Le Rosey's bilingual system. As time passes, Roséens pass through different stages on their route to bilingualism and the ability to operate academically, professionally and socially in different cultures and languages.

The Benefits of Bilingualism

Studies show that bilingualism not only provides extra opportunities and abilities for the child but that it also boosts cognitive development and enriches and enhances educational programmes. Above all bilingualism opens an alternative world to students.

By studying in the foreign language – with French-speaking teachers from France, Switzerland, Belgium and Canada, or with English-speaking teachers from the UK, Australia, Ireland, the USA and elsewhere – students are exposed to two world languages, two cultures, and two different ways of studying, learning and relating to people.

And, of course, for many Rosey students English and French may be their second and third languages...

Le Rosey: a formidable languages programme

Rosey students often achieve remarkable levels of understanding and fluency in their foreign language learning.

Five languages – English, French, German, Spanish and Italian – are a standard part of the Rosey curriculum, with foreign language and mother tongue classes offered at many levels. Within clearly defined guidelines nearly all Roséens learn a third language after English and French, and many take up a fourth.

Increasing numbers of students opt for an “extra-curricular” language, sometimes as a private class and sometimes as part of their timetable. Putonghua (Standard Mandarin Chinese), Arabic, Turkish, Japanese, Russian and Latin, for example, are available at many levels for an additional payment.

Le Rosey: a Mother Tongue Policy

Roséens have over thirty mother tongues.

Mastering their mother tongue is an important part of students' cultural identity, and as well as helping them to acquire further languages it contributes to general cognitive development. So, although academic programmes are in English and French, Le Rosey – like the IBO – has a “mother tongue entitlement” policy.

Roséens are expected to follow mother-tongue classes – and over twenty languages are available. Teachers follow the essential lines of the language and literature programmes in the students' home countries. This becomes crucial for the Pre-Bac and the IB, where the literary nature and difficulty of the programme make a mother-tongue IB Literature A course by far the best, and sometimes the only feasible, option.

A special non-profit *forfait* system passes on the cost to the parents.

Over the last five years, the following “extra-curricular” languages have been taught as mother tongues on our Pre-Bac and IB programme: Arabic, Armenian, Bulgarian, Chinese, Dutch, Dzongkha, Farsi, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Icelandic, Japanese, Kurdish, Korean, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Swedish, Swahili, Thai and Turkish.