



The best bilingual education in the heart of London



**VICENTE CAÑADA BLANCH
SPANISH SCHOOL**

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BUILD BRIDGES

Isabel Martínez, Director of The Spanish School in Kensington, on the benefits of being bilingual

Languages are no longer mere instruments of communication, but also a much-needed set of bridges between different cultures in our global world. As key players in education, schools must contribute to the communicative competence of the new generations. While half of the world's population is already bilingual, we now know that the human brain is wired for polyglotism: recent neuroimaging research has proved that bilingualism should be the norm, not the exception. Research suggests that bilingual education improves academic excellence and linguistic competence in both languages. Bilingual children develop a mental agility monolinguals lack and perform cognitive tasks better; they are more creative and better at problem-solving; they score higher on standardised

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tests, and their abilities transfer to the acquisition of other languages. Maybe even more importantly today, bilingual education fosters the appreciation of other cultures and provides better job opportunities – two issues that are undoubtedly central to our global societies.

Within the context of bilingual education, language immersion is considered one of the fastest methods to become fluent in a second or foreign language. A bilingual curriculum in Spanish and English in the UK has unquestionable advantages for both the native Spanish speakers and the native English speakers. Firstly, Spanish and English are two of the three most widely used world languages, so full proficiency in both offers students a future ripe with opportunities. While this type of programme preserves the heritage,



Above
Pupils at Instituto Español Cañada Blanch

language and culture of the Spanish students, native English speakers greatly benefit from school immersion in Spanish, the language with the second-largest number of native speakers after Mandarin Chinese.

The Instituto Español Cañada Blanch is a case in point; it forms part of the Spanish Ministry of Education's network of Spanish Schools abroad that cater to the educational needs of international students. The objective is to extend the access to high-quality bilingual education (in Spanish and the language of the host country). In the UK, a unique bilingual programme in Spanish and English – which also includes 3-4 hours a week of French – has been developed since the 1970s at Cañada Blanch

Spanish School, where native English speakers and native Spanish speakers are integrated for instruction, so that both groups of students play the role of language model and language learner at different times. It is an inclusive school, offering pre-school, primary and senior education including the IB. The teachers are natives of one language or the other. The curriculum taught is the Spanish one, and students may continue their studies or a professional career in the UK or Spain. This curriculum, as well as the immersion program in Spanish, enables students to achieve a high level of competence in both languages. French is also studied from the first year of primary education to the second year of Baccalaureate, and Latin and Galician are also offered as optional subjects. Students and parents actively take part

in school life through their representatives on the Board of Governors and the Parents Association. The school follows the calendar set by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea: classes start in the second week of September and end in the second week of July. Lessons begin at 8.45am and finish at 3.25pm (primary) or 4.30pm (senior school). From 3.30pm students can attend after-school clubs. The school canteen offers Spanish cuisine in the dining room,

but students may also bring a packed lunch from home.

At The Spanish School, we believe that every student can achieve bilingually at very high levels. It is our mission to promote lifelong language learning, bi-literacy, personal integrity, a global awareness and academic excellence through a bilingual Spanish immersion programme. 🌐



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