



**A  
Survey  
of  
Classics Teaching  
in  
Preparatory Schools**

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March 1999**

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## *FULL LISTING OF RESPONSES*

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## Introduction

The questionnaire (pages 19-20) on which these results are based formed part of SATIPS Classics Broadsheet Number (Spring 1998). I am grateful to the 54 respondents for the care and detail of their replies. Any corollaries to be drawn from the statistics in this survey will inevitably be subject to qualification on the grounds that the sample surveyed is unrepresentative. I know, for example, (from my customer database of *A Latin Wordlist for Prep schools*) that at least double this number of schools have some Latin, and there are presumably yet more. However, I hope that some of the general trends observed here may be valid.

## Brief summary of findings

The typical prep school Classics teacher has a Classical degree of some kind and a post-graduate teaching qualification. He/she has been in his/her current post for about ten years and works in a school of about 270 pupils. The teaching allocation to Latin will be four 35-minute lessons in each of years 6 - 8, with no allocation to Greek. The coursebook followed will be a combination of *Disce Latinum* and home-made support materials. Candidates will be offered at CE levels 2, 3 and scholarship level. The teacher will take greatest pleasure in the linguistic competence achieved by his/her best pupils and their enjoyment of Latin, but will be frustrated by constraints of time and the lack of opportunities for interchange with colleagues in other schools.

## Conclusions

The traditional yardstick of CE Latin Level 3 is still largely being adhered to, but it is encouraging to see this closely followed by Level 2, presumably being sat by candidates who have done less Latin or who cannot cope with the greater grammatical load of Level 3. This was, I believe, part of the rationale for the introduction of the 'new-style' tiered paper in the early 1990s. The relatively low entry for Level 4 is presumably because children capable of this will be sitting the Common Scholarship paper or the scholarship papers of individual public schools, the grammatical demands of which largely overlap.

The relatively high percentage of teachers producing their own materials is interesting. *Disce Latinum* came on-stream in the mid-80s and I suspect commanded a higher market share then even than it does now. The disparate nature of Latin provision in prep schools and the changing expectations of Common Entrance and scholarship papers over the past fifteen years or so have led teachers to be more eclectic in their use of text books, those with the requisite expertise developing their own materials in the perceived absence of a 'standard' prep school course. What works in and satisfies the needs of one school may not in another, and the ideal universal prep school Latin course book is thus unlikely ever to be written.

The Greek situation is even more clear cut, Wilding's *Greek for Beginners* and the more modern *Athenaze* accounting for over 80% of the market. The story-line of *Athenaze*, at least in its initial stages, is widely considered to be boring. Reservations concerning *Greek for Beginners* include the introduction too soon of tenses fairly rarely found in 'real' Greek, and the introduction too late of participles, without one of which hardly any Greek sentence is complete. I suspect that the widespread use of Wilding is largely *faute de mieux*: there is clearly a gap in the market for a Greek course targeted at prep school children, and I know of several colleagues who are developing their own materials.

The most frustrating aspects of teaching cited were constraints of time (CE at Levels 1-3 is perfectly viable on three years at four lessons a week, but scholarship level is definitely a rush), demotivated children, poor memory/learning work and the teaching of mixed ability classes. What most prep school classics teachers - often constituting a department of one within a school, and feeling isolated - would value more than anything else in terms of professional support is the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with other teachers. Nationwide INSET is falling into a biennial pattern thanks to co-operation between IAPS and SATIPS, but this alone is clearly inadequate, and the system of more localised Area Training Boards in classics appears to be at best patchy. It is hoped that the recent initiative of a prep school classics e-mail discussion group will at least give those with internet access the chance to communicate virtually instantly with like-minded colleagues.

## Classics Teachers

Number of years in current post:

highest	31 years
lowest	2 terms
average	11 years

Teachers with:

Latin O level/GCSE	100%
Latin A level	96%
Latin degree level	80%
Greek O level/GCSE	67%
Greek A level	61%
Greek degree level	63%
Teaching qualification	57%
Other postgraduate qualification	6%

## Schools

### Size of school:

largest	700
smallest	36
average	272

### Schools offering Latin in:

Year 4	9%
Year 5	59%
Year 6	89%
Year 7	96%
Year 8	96%

### Schools offering Latin at:

CE level 1	19%	(21% of candidates)
CE level 2	67%	(42% of candidates)
CE level 3	74%	(37% of candidates)
CE level 4	20%	(15% of candidates)
scholarship level	76%	(18% of candidates)

Schools offering Greek 22%

### Schools offering Greek at:

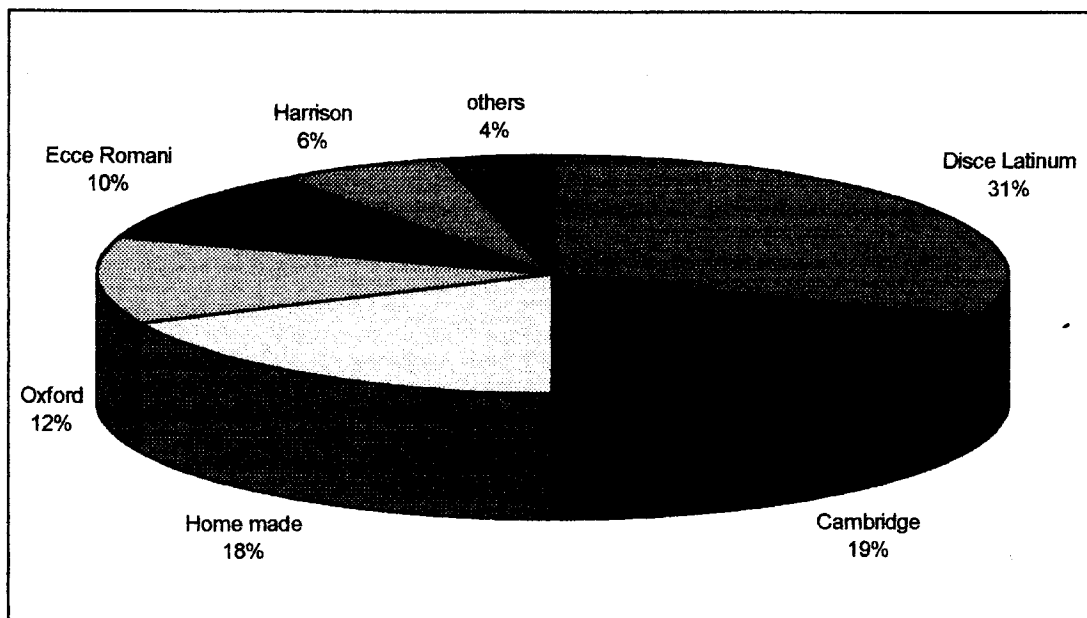
CE	13%	(17% of candidates)
scholarship level	19%	(12% of candidates)

**Timetable allocation (in minutes)**

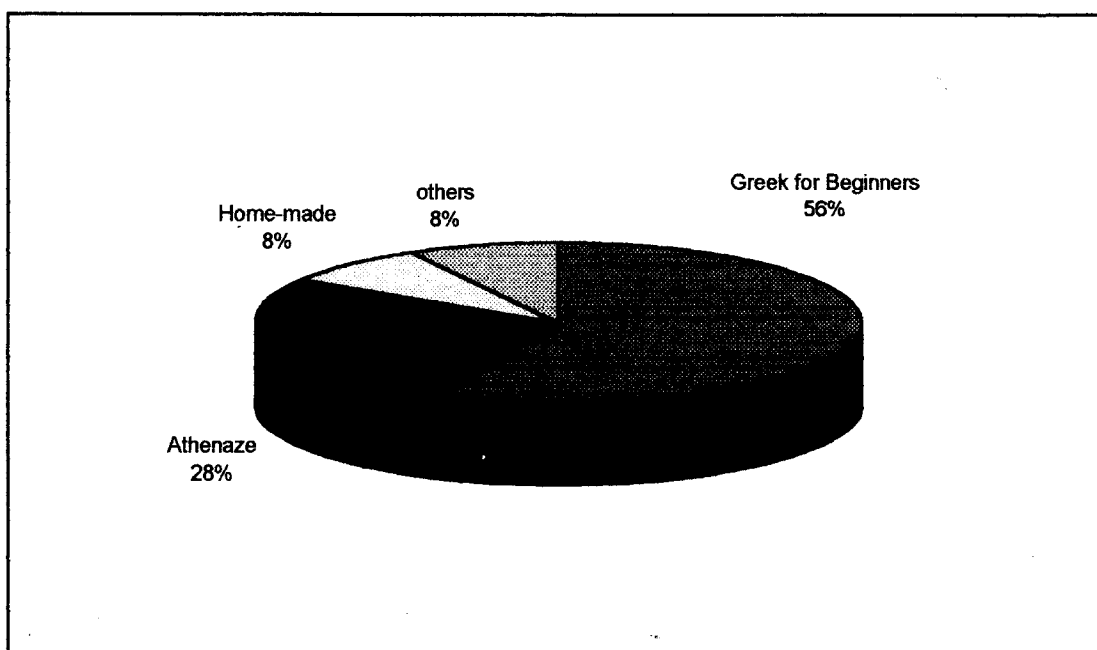
	<b>highest figure</b>	<b>lowest figure</b>	<b>average figure</b>	<b>avg number of lessons/week</b>
<b>Latin</b>				
Yr 4	105	15	53	1
Yr 5	200	15	108	3
Yr 6	200	40	125	4
Yr 7	210	70	133	4
Yr 8	245	70	142	4
<b>Greek</b>				
Yr 6	100	30	67	2
Yr 7	105	35	64	2
Yr 8	105	30	67	2

# COURSE BOOKS USED

## Latin Courses



## Greek Courses



### **What gives you the greatest pleasure in your teaching?**

Pupils' good progress	42%
Pupils' enjoyment	27%
Working with scholars	7%
A successful lesson	5%
The children	5%
Pupils' progression to GCSE	5%
Positive parental feedback	3%
Cross-curricular links	2%
Words	2%
Imparting a good grounding	2%

### **What do you consider to be the most frustrating aspect of your teaching?**

Time constraints	34%
Demotivated children	10%
Children's poor memory/learning	9%
Mixed ability teaching	9%
Having to fight one's corner	7%
Time for scholars	4%
Paperwork	3%
Colleagues' attitude	3%
Differing expectations of senior schools	3%
Failure to communicate an idea	2%
Lack of suitable textbooks	2%
No encouragement to pursue studies	2%
Too heavy a timetable	2%
Lack of a subject room	2%
Children missing classes	2%
Inability to write English	2%
Falling standards	2%
Low ability of children	2%
Lack of time for Greek	2%



## What would you value most in terms of professional support in your teaching?

INSET and exchange of ideas with other teachers	33%
Better resources (IT, videos etc.)	16%
More staffing	11%
More lesson time	7%
A decent textbook	7%
Support of other staff	4%
Time / stress management	2%
Publicity for Latin	2%
Support from the establishment	2%
Time for the weaker pupils	2%
One's own subject room	2%
Sympathy	2%
No further reduction in syllabuses	2%
Interference	2%
Keeping Classics on the curriculum	2%
Help with scholarship candidates	2%
Realistic scholarship expectations	2%

## **What gives you the greatest pleasure in your teaching?**

1. Obviously, pupil progress - and success (A grades!). But also those lessons that 'click' to everyone's satisfaction.
2. Reading Latin with scholars group. Seeing 'weak' boys do really well in Latin (especially those with 'serious problems' in English/spelling).
3. Pupils actively expressing their own enjoyment of Latin!
4. The production by a pupil of a stylish translation or prose.
5. The kids.
  
6. The acquisition of expertise in one's pupils.
7. Getting the pupils to see something new for the first time.
8. The holidays! Seriously, finding a pupil keen and making progress by dint of effort.
9. Kindling pupils' interest in the teaching of Classics - especially Latin.
10. Pupils' enthusiasm and growing confidence.
  
11. When grammar learned in Latin mirrors English and students realise the value and understand.
12. Helping the children to appreciate and read Latin (and Scripture!).
13. Teaching the Classical languages and background to bright children who get a lot of enjoyment and education from it.
14. 'Language-lining.'
15. Seeing progress - enjoyment.
  
16. The sudden firing of a raw intellect by things Classical - whether linguistic or historical.
17. Boys enjoy Classics and want to look further into Classical remains and sample artefacts.
18. At the top of the school - pupils translating well and seeing the finer points; the enthusiasm of young beginners.
19. Encouraging feed-back from parents.
20. Successful implanting of grammatical and syntactical structures; children's enjoyment of the ancient culture.
  
21. Seeing pupils do well.
22. Introducing pupils to Latin after a long period of famine in Gloucestershire.
23. Words - their uses and meanings.
24. Communicating an enthusiasm for French and Latin to children of any age.
25. I also teach Maths. I like the variety and teaching both subjects at PSS level.
  
26. Scholarship work.
27. Success.
28. Inter-reaction with pupils.
29. Interacting with children, and seeing them succeed.
30. Developing young minds. Pupils I have led to a higher standard than mine at prep school age.
  
31. Favourable comments from parents and excellent results from some boys. An occasional boy doing CE or scholarship to England.
32. Succeeding in keeping children well-motivated and working to their full potential and ultimately getting good CE grades.
33. Teaching Latin and Greek to a well motivated and enthusiastic year 8 scholarship class.
34. Seeing children realize or exceed their potential (at whatever level) and their pleasure at so doing.
35. Seeing children enjoy the subject and reach a high standard.
  
36. The children! Progress made or effort.
37. The languages themselves/the boys themselves (sometimes!) / improvisation / being a living representative of 2500(?) years of learning literature.
38. Sending children onto secondary schools who have a secure grounding.
39. Anything cross-curricular.
40. Seeing measurable progress being made. Hearing of those who continue to GCSE and beyond.

41. Seeing children, not all of whom are academic, making some progress with Latin and enjoying their Classical Studies topics. Also hearing that former pupils have continued with Latin to GCSE, A level and beyond.
42. The magic moment of joy when the 'penny drops.'
43. Response from pupils for a good lesson. Smiles from them and me at their successes.
44. Hard to say. A well-planned and successful lesson when the children really enjoy it; the spontaneous rather than dug-out response.
45. Knowing my pupils will continue Latin at their next school because they enjoy it!
  
46. The moments when the boys jump up and down with excitement, whether it be Latin, Greek, Music, or RS...
47. Teaching pure Latin and Greek language.
48. For children to say, unprompted, that Latin is among their favourite subjects. Excellent internal and public exam results.
49. Seeing real signs of progress with individual pupils.
50. Seeing children progress and surprise themselves, overcoming their pre-conceived ideas about the subject.
  
51. Good results in CE and Classical Studies material.
52. Pupils continuing the subject against massive peer pressure.
53. Reading A level literature.
54. Teaching scholarship level Latin to very bright pupils.

## What do you consider to be the most frustrating aspect of your teaching?

1. I cannot rid myself of the notion that pupil memory-power is diminishing with the years.
2. Insufficient time to prepare scholars, especially now that most senior schools are setting exams in February (as well as pressure from KS2 in Yr 6).
3. Not enough time to do all the things that the pupils and I would like!
4. My failure to communicate an idea.
5. Colleagues' dismissive and critical views on Classics.
  
6. Trying, often unsuccessfully, to cope with those who do not want to work.
7. The length of time pupils take to learn new material.
8. Inability, unwillingness of children to learn by heart. Lack of suitable textbooks.
9. Shrinking number of timetabled lessons.
10. Lack of time!
  
11. That students who are keen now will probably not be encouraged to pursue their studies.
12. The amount of time lost to lessons by the proliferation of sports fixtures on days other than Wednesday and Saturday!
13. Rather too heavy a timetable and not having much room for break.
14. Lack of time.
15. Not enough time. Kids who give up without trying.
  
16. No single factor - just the many diversions integral to a senior position in a London 'day school'!
17. Lack of recognition for Classics by governments and 'unintelligent' people. No separate lessons for scholarship candidates.
18. Lack of understanding of grammar even in English. Lack of memory.
19. Not having own subject-room.
20. Lapse of time between lessons; shortage of time in general.
  
21. Marking. Pupils taken out of classes to go to music!
22. Lack of teaching time, although I am extremely grateful that Latin is on the curriculum at all.
23. Children who can't write English.
24. Teaching mixed ability groups. Aiming at CE whilst using Cambridge Latin Course!
25. The inexorable overall decline in standards.
  
26. Teaching late beginners.
27. Paperwork.
28. Lack of time for preparation!
29. Not enough time.
30. Strength of feeling against 'the dead language' coupled with lack of self-motivation.
  
31. The lack of time to cover what I would like to teach.
32. Having to keep trying to teach children things they are not capable of learning, even when they become demotivated and troublesome.
33. Finding ways to motivate a low ability Year 7 set and trying to make the grammar appealing!
34. Having to fight the Classics corner in a crowded timetable, in the face of e.g. IT, Tech.
35. Teaching reluctant Latinists who really want to drop the subject.
  
36. Not enough time to enjoy the Cambridge Latin Course as only two lessons a week!
37. Being unable to open a newspaper, magazine or journal without being lectured on education. Teaching several different groups at once.
38. Being HM and not spending enough time on preparation, IT, etc.
39. Differing requirements/expectations/entrance and scholarship papers of senior schools.
40. Time limitations. A general drop in standards of learning discipline.

41. Lack of time to do the job properly because of 1. timetable restrictions, 2. as a consequence having to 'cram' for CE, 3. having pupils leave at 13 and not seeing them through to GCSE!
42. Not having sufficient lesson time to do the subject justice.
43. Lack of time for Greek.
44. Writing schemes (although necessary); not having continuity/consistency in demands of vocabulary and grammar from one course to another. Having to persuade children that parents who don't appreciate Latin are wrong!
45. Having to teach mixed ability classes.
  
46. The waste of time in being forced to defend the Classics corner, as if any other subject had to justify its existence.
47. The mindless youth of today when they show how deeply sunk into 1990s culture they have become.
48. Pressure from other subjects on curriculum.
49. Time allocated to teaching and prep.
50. Restraints of time and demands of syllabus sometimes prohibit exploring areas that have interested pupils.
  
51. Range of ability in classes and lack of time.
52. Losing pupils to Business Studies.
53. Constant justification for curriculum time/place in curriculum.
54. Constant pressure on curriculum time (resisted so far!). Preparing scholarship candidates for different exams at different times with different syllabuses.

### **What would you value most in terms of professional support in your teaching?**

1. Masses of well produced 20-minute videos illustrating all aspects of life in the classical world!
2. Another member of staff in the department (not full-time), giving greater flexibility in setting. More say in decisions as to which boys continue Latin to CE.
3. Hmm!?! Not sure!
4. More or longer lessons.
5. I'm okay now. I'm retiring this year!
  
6. Exchange of ideas and information.
7. Time/stress management.
8. A decent textbook!
9. INSET courses available mostly very helpful.
10. No ready answer to this one.
  
11. A chance to share ideas with others teaching Latin to younger children - there can't be many. A clever, concise explanation of the value of learning Latin which I could present to parents and colleagues. I don't feel that I present the case as well as an 'expert' could.
12. At present I am a department of one, teaching both here and at our senior school to GCSE: so, a colleague!
13. A meeting once or twice a year to discuss how things are in other schools.
14. Encouragement from the establishment.
15. Time to help weaker candidates properly.
  
16. Revival of the annual local Classics meetings, ditched shamefully, I believe, by HMC.
17. My own room to display Classics for all.
18. Interesting textbooks and other materials. Feed-back from senior schools. Support in convincing parents and pupils that what we do is valuable.
19. -
20. Bi-annual meeting of local teachers' group - I haven't heard about an 'Ellis' for years!
  
21. Co-operation of rest of teaching staff.
22. Sympathy and understanding that the academic level which I shall achieve with my pupils of necessity will be very lowly.
23. More time for individual teaching.
24. INSET.
25. No further reduction in either syllabus!
  
26. -
27. Lack of interference.
28. Continued contact with colleagues. Use of IT in Classics.
29. A competent head of department to take over the reins!
30. Mailing list of recommended sites, trips, drama productions etc. on offer, particularly in own area.
  
31. Maintaining Classics on the curriculum.
32. More and better resources to enable the least academically able to maintain interest and motivation and achieve some progress in linguistic work as well as classical background studies.
33. A slightly increased timetable allocation and two preps, not one, a week - otherwise it can be a rush.
34. Any authoritative statement that Classics have a place (limited though it may in practice be) in any academic curriculum.
35. Some support with the junior teaching. I now teach a very full timetable solely.
  
36. Advice on strategies for learning effectively in such a short space of time to scholarship level!
37. A colleague in the 'Classics Department' whose company is stimulating (My current colleague does six periods a week, but it's a help out of all proportion because she is the right person).
38. Occasional talk with other Latin teachers - I already manage this.
39. Better IT software for Classics.
40. Interest shown by other colleagues. Chance to visit public schools to observe and compare notes (rare opportunities).

41. Contact with other Classics teachers.
42. -
43. Time and money to instruct me in IT.
44. Resource banks, especially in terms of IT (CDs) and video/cassettes. Advice on how to run a mixed ability class with Level1/2/scholars all in one group.
45. That my opinion was considered important when the classes for next year were set.
  
46. An HM who grasped the desirability of the Classics as well as rugby and cricket.
47. Full access to the JACT database of all Classics teachers, to see who is in the 'traditional' camp and who is in the CLC guesswork camp!!
48. -
49. Simply contact with teachers doing the same job.
50. A wider appreciation that the skills and disciplines acquired through Latin are of value in other subject areas.
  
51. Realistic expectations from senior school teachers about 'scholarship' level required of a 13 year-old.
52. Communication!
53. Good computer programmes for language teaching.
54. Yearly conferences such as SATIPS covering wide range of topics. More contact/problem sharing with colleagues from other schools, including senior schools.