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News and Reports

The East London Classics Summer School 2025

Sarah Merali-Smith
The East London Classics Summer School, London, UK

We are absolutely delighted to report that the summer school 2025 (our 5th year!) was another resounding success. Once again, we welcomed a brilliant and dedicated group of students, of whom we are immensely proud. This year, we had students from 12 different schools across London, all joining us in Hackney for an intensive 5-day GCSE Latin revision course (see Figures 1 and 2).

We were especially pleased to have been able to offer a number of full and half bursaries this year, thanks to the generous support of the Classical Association, the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies, the UCL Classics Society, Professor Mary Beard, and other independent sponsors. More than 80% of our students received some form of financial assistance. Many came from families with Pupil Premium or Free School Meals eligibility, single parent households, or those facing financial difficulties. We were also proud to note that 70% of our cohort were from non-white backgrounds, and that more than half spoke a language other than English at home (see Figure 3).



Figure 1. The Team.



Figure 2. Our Hub.

Over the course of the week, students undertook four daily Latin language sessions covering essential grammar from the GCSE specification, with a clear focus on preparing for their examinations in 2026. Teacher-led lessons gradually developed into collaborative tasks and independent study, allowing students to engage deeply with the intricacies of grammar and translation in unseen passages (see Figures 4–7).

Of particular note once again was our 'Golden Time' lecture series, which this year was as rich and inspiring as ever. Caroline Mackenzie opened the week with a fascinating exploration of etymology and the trickiest words to commit to memory, a talk which not only deepened linguistic understanding but also gave students practical strategies to strengthen their recall. William Lawrence, returning by popular demand, treated us to another enthralling session on 'Classical London', showing how ancient Greece and Rome continue to shape the city's fabric and identity

Email: sarahmerali@hotmail.com
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Figure 3. One of our bursary students.



Figure 4. A teaching seminar.



Figure 5. A teaching seminar.



Figure 6. A teaching seminar.



Figure 7. A teaching seminar.

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Figure 8. Our speaker, William Lawrence.



Figure 9. Our speaker, Dr Mark Sowden.



Figure 10. Our brilliant tour of King's College, London, with Prof Daniel Orrells.

(see Figure 8). Later in the week, we were captivated by Mark Sowden's discoveries from his mudlarking adventures on the Thames foreshore, bringing archaeology to life through the tangible fragments of London's past (see Figure 9). Finally, Professor Daniel Orrells of King's College London returned to speak on Virgil's *Aeneid*, a set text for our students, reminding us that this great epic is not only a tale of Rome's foundation but also a story of migration, resilience, and hope (see Figure 10).

The series, as always, was designed to broaden horizons and encourage students to imagine themselves pursuing classics at a

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Figure 11. Surprise from Prof Mary Beard.



Figure 12. Presentation of certificates.

higher level. Students were given the chance to ask questions of our speakers, many of whom generously shared personal insights into academic life and career pathways.

A particular highlight of this year came at the very end of the week, when Professor Mary Beard made a surprise appearance once again (see Figure 11). She congratulated the students on their outstanding work ethic and commitment, and spoke



Figure 13. Students with their certificates.



Figure 14. Break time.

powerfully about the importance of classics in understanding the modern world, touching on questions of empire, migration, race, gender, and power. The students listened with rapt attention, inspired by her words and encouraged to see Classics as a living, relevant subject. It was the perfect conclusion to a demanding but rewarding week.

The final day ended with a celebratory pizza lunch and the awarding of certificates of achievement (see Figures 12 and 13). Each student also received a bespoke valedictory report highlighting their strengths and progress. We were thrilled to hear from many students and parents that the summer school not only

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Figure 15. Break time.

boosted their confidence in Latin, but also encouraged them to consider continuing with classics at A Level and beyond (see Figures 14 and 15).

Here are just a few of the voices from this year's cohort:

"I really enjoyed the Golden Time lectures, especially Caroline Mackenzie's talk on etymology – it made me think about Latin in a whole new way." – Student

"Thank you for the bursary. Without it I wouldn't have been able to come, and I feel much more ready for GCSE now." – Student

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to you and everyone involved in organising such a rich and inspiring summer school programme. My child came home each day excited to share what they had learned – from the immersive language sessions to the visit to King's College London and the incredible lecture by Professor Dan Orrells. – Parent

"Thank you for sponsoring my students – it has made all the difference to their learning and their confidence." – Teacher

"I deeply appreciate the care, enthusiasm, and academic rigour that shaped the week. The warm and inclusive environment you created allowed our child to learn, grow, and feel part of something meaningful." – Parent

We remain deeply grateful to all our sponsors and supporters who make this initiative possible.

We now look forward to welcoming students again at our 2-day Easter Revision course, which will take place on 7–8 April 2026. For further details, please visit our website: www.eastlondonclassicssummerschool.com, or if you have any questions, or would like to support us, email us at eastlondoncss@gmail.com.

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