

Language Policy

We educate our students to become global citizens who participate actively in their community applying their intellectual, physical and emotional resources. Language learning is at the core of all our efforts. We believe that language forms the way we understand the world. Language affirms our identity and autonomy: As global citizens, it enables us to communicate with others, to take part in society and to enjoy culture. This is why we support language learning across the curriculum and core activities for all students.

This policy outlines our school's language learning goals and discusses the pathways for student attainment of those goals.

Overall goal of language learning:

We see language at the core of developing intercultural awareness and international-mindedness. To this end, we encourage learners to question their cultural assumptions and to think critically about language. We support the development of international communicative competence in the first language and in at least one additional language. Aligning with Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence (Byram 1997) we wish to develop

- ☐ orientation knowledge to understand artifacts in another language (savoir),
- ☐ the capability to act appropriately and without fear in unfamiliar situations (savoir-faire),
- ☐ the ability to understand other's perspectives, to reflect upon own attitudes and to accept cultural diversity (savoir-être), ☐ the ability to appraise culture(s) critically (savoir-s'engager),
- ☐ the ability to life-long intercultural learning (savoir-apprendre)

across the curriculum. Thus, we see language as a means to personal development, as a medium to learn and as a resource to participate.

Language & Learning processes:

Since we wish to develop intercultural communicative competence, language learning becomes an integral part of all learning processes. Language and subject learning cannot be separated, which makes all teachers language teachers. The following types of language inform all learning processes:

Learning through language: Language as means of written and oral communication is a medium through which learners understand the subject-specific concepts, methods and discourse. This discourse is often very abstract, context-reduced and formal. One task of our teachers is to introduce learners to this subject-specific language.

Learning language: Learning processes happen through communication with the teachers and fellow students. These communicative situations are often less formal and less abstract, so they require basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS). This is especially important when a lack of BICS inhibits learning processes. The development of general reading, writing, speaking and listening skills is essential to managing learning processes.

Learning about language: This active engagement with language traces back to the reflection of culture. Through the analysis and critique of subject-specific texts learners understand how knowledge in a subject is generated and communicated. This encourages them to reflect upon the cultural context itself, which can be specific to a subject area, nation, era, social group etc.

Linguistic profile of our school:

In the prep class we teach many language lessons in order to prepare students for the Diploma programme language courses. Vocabulary and grammar structures are improved. To begin the Diploma Programme, we expect students to be fluent in reading, writing and speaking of English at B2 level (See Appendix).

Around two-thirds of our IB prep class and DP are German native speakers. For German native speakers we offer Language and Literature in German to further develop their mother tongue. In English B HL they have the opportunity to enhance their English skills up to C1/C2 level.

Non-native speakers of German take the Group 1 Language and Literature course in English. Because they are living in a German environment they are required to take German B. Students who do not have prior knowledge of German are placed in ab initio; those with more background knowledge are placed in German B SL or HL. Students and parents should be aware that German universities always require students, at a minimum, have taken German B Standard Level.

English is our language of instruction in IB DP and the prep class. Since English is not the first language of a very large part of our pupils, we pay special attention to language support in classes (see Language and Teaching). In our documents and communication with the school community, we use British English spelling, but we allow for other varieties in students' work as long as they are used consistently.

We value the learners' home culture and first language as a source of diversity in our school. In order for students to maintain fluency and to develop literacy, we plan to offer school-supported self-taught Language A at a later stage of developing the programme. We attempt to encourage activities which include mother tongue language use into the CAS programme. Also, the library offers resources in our students' first languages for enjoyment and for use in class.

To enable students to participate in the local community, German ab initio is mandatory for all students whose first language is not German except for students with a high proficiency in German.

English or German as an Additional Language Support

Individual students may wish to take advantage of our offer to participate in intensive language training at our Academy of Languages (also part of the F&U group of schools) before the beginning of the programme or during school breaks.

English as an Additional Language Support lessons are available for identified students on a weekly basis. Writing support for students is often offered in a workshop format. Individual consultations are available to students seeking more individualized feedback on the development of their language skills.

In our school library, regular German as an Additional Language support lessons are scheduled for students. Our librarian is a German native speaker and provides individual support during opening hours in addition to lessons. The library contains a wealth of resources for German language learning.

Special Educational Needs

Please see our policy on Special Educational Needs.

Best practice strategies for language learning:

Monitoring and assessment

- All teachers in the IB, in addition to being subject specialists, are language teachers and have a responsibility to foster an environment for students to develop inside and outside the classroom.
- Initial lessons with new cohorts are to use formative assessment of the language level of the student (this can be done both informally and formally within the lessons). The strengths and weaknesses are to be discussed in the initial few staff meetings. If necessary individual educational plans can be created to support the needs of the students.
- Teachers are required to monitor and assess language development of the students.
- Each subject area needs to look at the language requirements of the course and match these with the needs of the students.
- Reoccurring errors should be diagnosed and matched with support material or specialised lesson.
- Oral feedback in lessons regularly provided, with mistakes identified and corrected.
- Best practices and exemplar answers are used to model good language practice.
- Peer marking & feedback are used not just on content but language (matched up with the language requirements of the course).

Inclusion and equality

In lessons

- Word lists provided at the start of a new unit
- Instructional posters
- Writing frames
- Differentiation of tasks
- Dictionaries available and their usage encouraged
- Reading aloud together
- Use of mini plenaries
- Use of non-written cues (audio & visual)
- Use of assessment for learning strategies

At home

- Reading lists provided
- Additional enrichment material
- Regular dialogue with parents, students and homeroom teachers
- Meet and Greet dates are used to educate parents on support for language development
- Recommended additional revision programs

Virtual classroom

- Course material and support made available online via Managebac
- Instructional videos created using screencasts
- Index of language support websites made where appropriate

First language support

The IB Programme emphasizes the importance of first or best language usage. We recognise many of our students use English as a secondary language and believe that it is important to recognise and celebrate the diversity of our students. This includes recognising the importance of their first language.

- To learn and identify the language backgrounds In the initial weeks of the new cohort's year
- Encourage the use of first language to English dictionaries
- Subject specific wordlists to provide a space for translation into a first language
- Provide time in lesson and outside to converse & communicate in first language where appropriate
- Provide time in lesson and outside to reflect, contrast & compare differences between English and first languages.
- Allow students to research and consume media in own language.
- When appropriate: provide opportunity for group work in language groups.
- Recognise the use of weak-strong language ability groupings to provide peer support.

Conclusion

The Language policy will be reviewed every year in order to assess the effectiveness of the program. As new ideas are developed, staff undertakes training, and new research presents relevant perspectives, the language policy will evolve accordingly.

Suggested ideas and procedures will be reviewed with the collaboration of the teachers, Head of School, students and parents. In order to keep the whole school community informed of the policy developments the policy will be available in OpenApply and for all enrolled students in ManageBac.

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coordinator), Dr.Elke Heinicke (Head of IB/IB DP coordinator) in collaboration with IB team

Appendix: Indicators Level B2 (Council of Europe 2001)

Listening comprehension:

- able to understand extended speech, lectures
- can follow complex line of argument if the topic is familiar
- able to understand TV news and current affairs programmes

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- able to understand the majority of films in standard dialect

Reading comprehension:

- can read articles reports about contemporary problems
- able to identify the author's viewpoint
- understand contemporary prose

Interaction:

- able to interact fluently and spontaneously
- can discuss familiar topics actively and account for own views

Oral production:

- can present detailed descriptions on a wide range of topics
- can explain viewpoints, advantages and disadvantages

Written production:

- can write essays, reports and letters on topics of personal interest
- can write reviews of a film, a book or a play