



Mother Tongue Information for High School Parents of Children who are Singapore Citizens, Singapore Permanent Residents, or contemplating applying for Singaporean Permanent Residency.

Dear Parents,

Some of you who are Singapore Permanent Residents (SPRs) and Singapore Citizens (SCs) may have questions or concerns about the Ministry of Education (MOE) Mother Tongue Policy in the High School. This FAQ sheet aims to answer most of the concerns and questions that you may have.

1. What is the MOE Mother Tongue Policy?

This is a bilingual policy created by the government for all SPR and SC students in local schools. The policy was initially created to ensure that Singaporean residents maintain the language of their ethnic backgrounds to create and maintain a linguistically and culturally diverse Singapore. As SJI International comes under the umbrella of the MOE, we are also included in the MOE Mother Tongue Policy; in fact, it is one of the conditions of our operating license. The Elementary school is a Foreign System School (FFS) and does not come under the MOE Mother Tongue policy.

2. What is a Mother Tongue-in-Lieu?

If students have a cultural or linguistic connection to another language, they may apply for Mother Tongue-in-Lieu exemption (MTL-in-lieu) which allows them to study French, German, Japanese, Thai, Burmese or Arabic. There are also Non-Tamil Indian Languages (NTIL)- in - lieu available: Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Bengali and Punjabi.

3. Is my Child eligible to apply for a Mother Tongue Language Exemption?

Students MAY be eligible for an exemption if they fall in either of these 2 categories:

- a. Joining school mid-stream: Students who join or rejoin the Singapore school system midstream without prior learning of the MTL.**

For example, if your Child has been abroad for some time, and has now joined a Singapore school mid-stream, then they can apply to the Ministry of Education for exemption from studying the official MTL. Additionally, they could apply to study a non-official language such as French, German or Japanese instead of the Mother Tongue Language, or apply to study a non-Tamil Indian Language - in - lieu. All applications have to be made through the school, and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Students need to have a cultural connection to the MTL.

- b. Medical conditions: Children with certified medical conditions that would adversely affect their ability to cope with MTL, like dyslexia, autism spectrum disorder and ADHD MAY be eligible for Mother Tongue Language exemption.**

Applications have to be made through the school admission department, and the Child's evaluation report has to be submitted. Please be advised that the exemption decision lies with the MOE, and it may not be successful.

4. We have recently secured Singapore Permanent Residency. What does this mean for my Child's language pathway?

Their pathway depends on many factors. If your Child was studying a Government Approved language (Chinese, Malay, Tamil etc.) before they became an SPR then there will be no change to your Child's language pathway. If, however, your Child was studying a non- government approved language (e.g. Spanish) before they obtained their SPR then they may be asked to study an MTL (e.g. Chinese) depending on how many years it has been since they studied that MTL. For example, this would mean either moving back to Chinese at school and dropping Spanish, or continuing with Spanish at school as long as they study Chinese (and sit for the O-level and A-level exams) outside school. If your child has never studied a Government Approved language (e.g. they have always studied Spanish, or Korean), then they may be eligible for a full exemption. These are all at the discretion of the MOE, and we strongly advise that families who are contemplating becoming SPRs to inform the Admissions Department and Mother Tongue Coordinator.

5. What is the Home Language Programme in SJI International?

The Home Language Programme is primarily for students studying on Dependent and Student passes whose Home Language is not English or another language taught in school as part of the mainstream curriculum. On a case-by-case basis, this programme may also be extended to Singaporean Citizens or Singaporean Permanent Residents who have been exempted from the MOE Language policy and who have a Home Language which is not English, Chinese, Malay or Tamil. This may also be extended to students who have MOE approval to study a Mother Tongue-in-lieu provided that they are of at least an intermediate level and not a beginner in that language **and that there is a pathway to IB Diploma Programme in Grades 11 and 12 (See questions 5 and 6).**

The Home Language lessons are timetabled in the language periods and students are withdrawn from their current timetabled language once they join the Home Language Programme.

Please be advised that the Home Language programme is parent funded and the costs will fluctuate depending on how many students are in the class. The Home Languages that we currently offer are Japanese, Korean, French, Thai, Vietnamese, German, Russian and Italian; however, we are open to offering more languages. Please contact the Mother Tongue Coordinator for more information on this programme.

6. My Child’s Mother Tongue is an approved in-lieu language (French, Japanese, German, Thai, Burmese, Arabic). Can they study one of these languages in school instead of Chinese?

Yes, however an appropriate language pathway through to the IB Diploma Programme must exist for your Child in order to study a language on the Parent-Funded Home Language Programme. Please see the table below for details:

Mother Tongue - in Lieu	Pathway to IB?
French	Yes. French exists as both a First and Second Language at IB
German	Yes, German exists as both a First and Second Language at IB
Japanese	Yes, Japanese exists as both a First and Second Language at IB
Thai	Not if your Child is a second language speaker of Thai, as Thai only exists as a first language at IBDP
Burmese	Not if your Child is a second language speaker of Burmese, as Burmese only exists as a first language at IBDP
Arabic	Yes, Arabic exists as both a First and Second Language at IBDP

7. My Child’s Mother Tongue is an approved Non-Tamil Indian Language-in-Lieu (Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Bengali, Punjabi). Can they study one of these languages instead of Chinese?

It depends. All requests to do these languages require permission from the Government and you will need to complete a non-Tamil Indian Language - in - lieu application form through the Admissions Department. Please see the table below for details:

Hindi	Yes. Hindi is offered as both a first and second language at IBDP.
-------	--

Gujarati, Urdu, Bengali, Punjabi	All of the other Indian languages only exist as Special request Literature courses at IBDP - which means the IB needs to create an examination, if possible, for your Child. It is recommended that students study these languages outside school and complete the Local Singapore O and A levels. They can then study Spanish in school as part of their curriculum, and can do Spanish as a second language at IBDP.
----------------------------------	--

8. If my Child has been offered an MOE language -in-lieu, do they have to study this language inside school on the Home Language Programme?

No, students may choose to take their Mother Tongue in-lieu languages outside of school. If the students choose to study outside, they are required to complete the Singapore O Level and A Level examinations in the appropriate language.

Each year, parents are required to sign a form taking responsibility for arranging tuition in the language and for entering their Child for the appropriate examinations when required as private candidates. The Mother Tongue Coordinator will advise on the registration procedure for external examinations at the appropriate time.

Please be advised that these students who are fulfilling their Mother Tongue requirement with the local O and A level will also take a language inside school as part of their curriculum and will **also be taking examinations in these subjects.**

9. I've heard that there is an age requirement for the Singapore O and A level examinations. Is this true?

Yes, there is an age requirement for local examinations. In order to be eligible to take the local O level as a private candidate, students must be 15 on January the 1st of the examination year. For A level (or MTLB) examinations, students must be 17 on January the 1st of the examination year. At SJI International, however, we encourage students to complete the A level examination during Grade 11, to avoid conflict with their IB examinations in Grade 12. Most students, however, will be 16 on January 1st of Grade 11, which is why the school will ask the Singapore Examination Assessments Board (SEAB) for permission for them to take the examination. In order to facilitate this process, the Mother Tongue Coordinator will keep you informed of the registration dates for the local O and A level examinations, and will request permission for your Child to take the examination. If your Child is not of the correct age, you will not be able to access the online registration system unless you have been given permission from the SEAB. Please be aware that permission to take the examination is not a given, and it is up to the discretion of the SEAB.

10. How do I register for the Local Singapore O and A level examinations?

The Mother Tongue Coordinator will send you a detailed letter with instructions in January or February of Grade 10 (Local O level) and Grade 11 (Local A level).

11. My Child has limited exposure to the Chinese/Malay/Tamil language. Will their Language skills be good enough to study it at IBDP level? There are three levels of Chinese in the High School for Grades 7 to 10: First, Second and Foreign.

Non-native Chinese-speaking students who are PR/SC are encouraged to follow the Second Language pathway, which leads on to Chinese B.Malay and Tamil Language students are on a pathway to complete Malay B SL and Tamil B SL. Many students from non- Chinese/Malay/Tamil backgrounds complete Second Language Chinese/Malay/Tamil at IB, which is the minimum level required to satisfy the Mother Tongue requirement. If, at the end of Grade 10, your Child's Language teacher thinks that they will not be successful at IBDP Chinese/Tamil/Malay, then there is another option. The school can enrol the students in the MTLB (Mother Tongue Language B syllabus) which is a local examination. It is quite challenging, but less difficult than Chinese/Malay/Tamil B SL and will satisfy the MOE Mother Tongue requirement. This will then allow your Child to start another language (e.g. ab initio Spanish) for their IBDP package. Please be aware, however, that there are certain criteria that your Child has to fulfill in order to be eligible for this examination, and it is the school's decision whether or not this would be a viable option for your Child.

12. When does the school recommend that Students take the MTLB pathway?

MTLB is a less challenging examination which is **only available in Malay, Chinese and Tamil** and not in any of the in-lieu languages. Students are unable to register as private candidates and the exam can only be taken at the end of year sitting. Decisions about eligibility for this route will be made by the school on a case-by-case basis. At a minimum we would expect to see:

- Significant interventions over time in collaboration between school / student / parents
- Full effort towards improvement by the student over time
- Full support of parents in supporting improvement
- Commitment to sustaining learning outside the school environment
- In the expert view of the Languages department despite exceptional effort being applied, the full range of achievement (1-7) is simply not possible at IB Diploma

13. If my Child is eligible to do the MTLB Local examination, what does that mean for their education pathway?

If the Language department recommends that your child complete the MTLB local examination to satisfy their Mother Tongue requirement, then students **must take an *ab initio* (beginner) language at IB**. This will be either Spanish, or depending on numbers, French or Indonesian. Japanese *ab initio* is also available as a parent-funded course. The MTLB is a Pass/Fail examination, and has no bearing on your Child's overall IBDP score.

14. If my Child is eligible to do the MTLB Local examination, what the processing of their education pathway?

First, your child will transfer to another Language Ab initio pre IB class after the IGCSE Language exam finished in Grade 10. Second, in their Grade 11, our school will register them for their MTLB Local examination.

15. If my Child is fail in Grade 11 MTLB Local examination, can they retake in Grade 12?

Sorry, No. Because the MTLB Local examination schedule may clash with the IBDP final exam schedule. Then your child has to continue study for MTL exam in their University time if they applied the local University.

16. Does this MTLB exam result will be include in my Child's IB score?

No. It just for fulfill the Singapore's Mother Tongue Policy.

17. Does oversea university require this MTLB exam result?

No. Only Singapore Local University required.

18. My Child has French - In -Lieu exemption. Can they take French *ab initio* at IB?

Sorry, no. Students must take a language at a minimum of B Standard Level to satisfy their mother tongue requirement. They are also able to take B HL and also Language and Literature/ Literature to satisfy their Mother Tongue requirement.

19. My Child's Malay/ Tamil/ Chinese is of an appropriate level to complete Malay/ Tamil/Chinese B SL but they want to study an *ab Initio* language. Can we do the Local A level in Malay/ Tamil/ Chinese (not MTLB) instead?

Sorry, no. If students are able to complete the Malay/ Tamil/ Chinese B SL course successfully, then it is the school's policy that they continue to study these languages in school on the IB programme. Students, however, do have the option of studying an *ab initio* language in addition to Malay/Tamil/Chinese B should they wish to do so.

20. My Child is an SPR, but our Mother Tongue is not on the Government Approved list. Can we study our Mother Tongue on the Home Language Programme?

If your Child is an SPR and their Mother Tongue is not Government approved (for example, Korean, Italian or Norwegian), it is possible to study your Mother Tongue on the Parent- Funded Home Language Programme. Please be aware that in this case, you will be expected to sign a letter each year saying that you are continuing with a Government Approved Language outside school (usually Chinese) and that you will register for both the O and A Level when the time comes.

21. If my Child has been given permission to study an in - lieu language but I discover later that my Child doesn't like it or is not succeeding, can I change back to Chinese or to another language?

Sorry, no. The government doesn't allow students to move from one language to another. Once in lieu language approved by MOE. It is irreversible.

22. My Child's Mother Tongue is a non-Tamil Indian language which is not approved by the government (e.g. Oriya, or Kannada). Can I apply for a full exemption?

Full exemptions are only given to students with diagnosed learning difficulties or who have not had much exposure to one of the Government Approved Languages (please see question 2). It is highly doubtful that an exemption will be given because your Child's Mother Tongue is not on the In- Lieu approved list of languages. The MOE will, instead, look at your Child's language history, and the language they have studied will become your Child's "Mother tongue."

23. What happens if my Child does not satisfy the Mother Tongue policy requirements?

It is a condition of the High School's operating licence that all SC and SPR students comply with the Mother Tongue Policy.

24. I've checked the various Admissions websites for Singapore Universities, and they clearly state that students who have not satisfied the Mother Tongue requirement may be given provisional admission, and only have to satisfy the requirement before they graduate. Why is SJI International so strict about the Mother Tongue Requirements?

Even though the local universities offer a pathway through to graduation for students who have not yet satisfied the Mother Tongue requirements, it is a condition of our operating license that we follow the

MOE Mother Tongue Policy and we must comply with the MOE policies and procedures. Therefore, students who graduate from SJI International will be expected to have satisfied the Mother Tongue requirements.

25. My Child has no desire to go to a Singapore university. Why do they have to follow the MOE Mother Tongue Requirements?

It is a condition of our operating license that all SCs and SPRs follow the MOE Mother Tongue Policy regardless of their university destination.

For any more information about the MOE Mother Tongue Policy, please contact Ms Cherry Guo at (cherry.guo@sj-international.com.sg); Home Languages Programme, please contact Ms Charlotte Lei (charlotte.lei@sj-international.com.sg)

