



ICSMILAN
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

PRIMARY YEARS PROGRAMME CURRICULUM HANDBOOK

Preschool to Year 6: A comprehensive look at our PYP curriculum.

25/26



INDEX

IB Mission Statement	3
The Primary Years Framework.....	4
Agency and Self Efficacy	6
The IB Learner Profile	8
Early Years (Preschool, Reception, Year 1)	9
A Transdisciplinary Curriculum Framework.....	10
Approaches to Learning (ATLs).....	14
Assessment in the PYP	16
Parent Teacher Conferences.....	20
Home Learning – Year 1 to Year 6 Guidelines.....	22
Language at ICS Milan.....	25
Scuola Paritaria.....	26
Multilingual Language Learners (MLL)	27
Home Languages.....	27
Digital Learning in the PYP	28
Our Approach.....	29
STEAM Approach.....	29
Our Commitment.....	31
The Year 6 PYP Exhibition.....	31
ICS Milan Programme of Inquiry.....	32
Sustainable Development Goals.....	34
Learning Across Subjects: Strands and Descriptions	35
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).....	44
Glossary of IB PYP Key Terms	46

IB Mission Statement

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end, the organisation works with schools, governments and international organisations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

(IB mission statement)

ICS Milan is committed to delivering the International Baccalaureate (IB) Programmes. The Early Years and Primary School is in the candidacy phase of the Primary Years Programme (PYP) and this is followed from Preschool to Year 6.



Mission and Vision

As part of the **Globeducate** family of schools, we promote the shared vision to prepare each student to become a global citizen who can shape the world. ICS Milan serves a diverse community of students from a range of nationalities, cultures and backgrounds. We offer a broad-based education that uses English as the main language of learning and caters for a range of student abilities.

Our vision is to inspire, motivate, and challenge all students to achieve their personal best. Our mission is to provide them with a rich, creative, and well-balanced educational experience.

Our mission is to offer a combination of "international" education through the medium of English, which maintains Italian educational options and allows our students to retain and appreciate their cultural and linguistic identity. We are further committed to promoting and supporting Italian cultural identity with our international students. Our Curriculum is fully integrated to enable this.

The Primary Years Framework

The PYP is grounded in the concept of agency - the understanding that all members of the school community have a role to play in learning. This principle brings together the three core elements of the programme: the learner, the approaches to teaching and learning, and the wider learning community. Rather than concentrating solely on what is planned, delivered, and evaluated, the PYP places importance on the individuals engaged in the process. It promotes active participation, where students, educators, and community members are encouraged to have a voice, make choices, and take ownership of learning. These interconnected elements help foster a meaningful and cohesive learning environment.

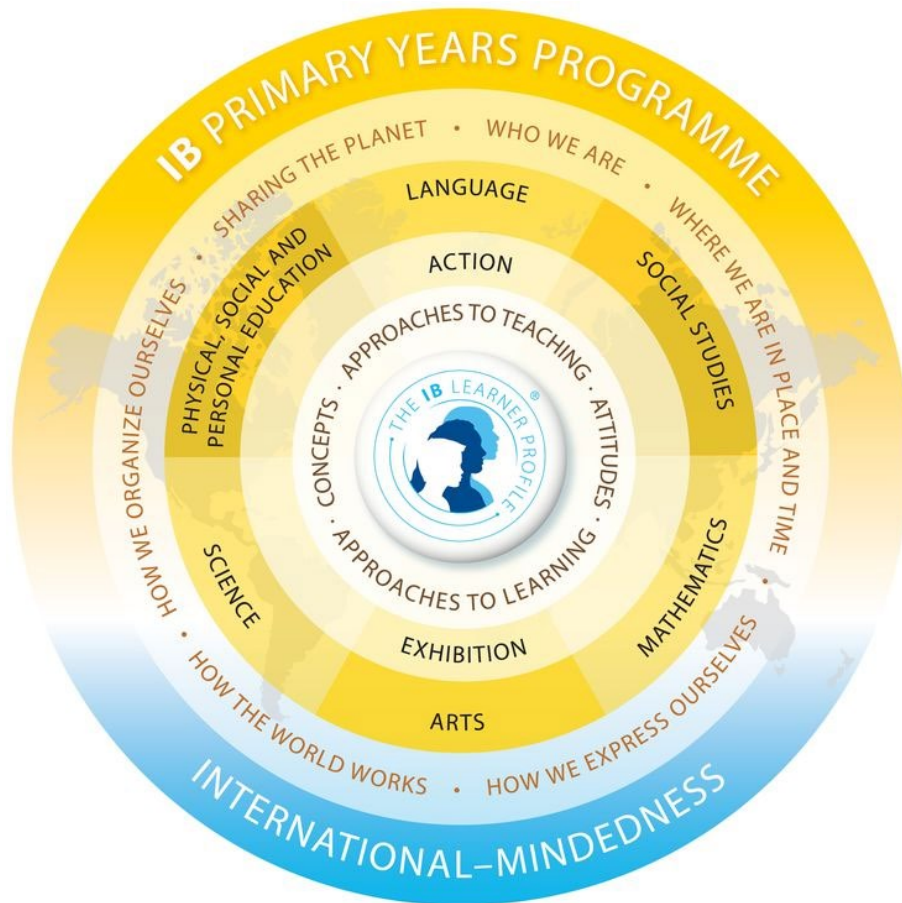


The learner focuses on what each student is learning and what they hope to achieve.

Learning and teaching look at how we can best support students in their learning.

The learning community highlights the importance of working together and the role everyone plays in helping students learn and grow.

ICS Milan's Early Years and Primary School provide a learning experience that responds to the diverse needs of all students through the PYP. Learning is crafted to be relevant, engaging, thought-provoking and purposeful. The PYP adopts a transdisciplinary model, in which globally significant themes shape the learning journey from the early years onward. Students are supported in making meaningful links across different subject areas, using disciplinary knowledge to investigate broad and important concepts.



A strong collaboration between students, families and educators fosters meaningful learning and nurtures international-mindedness. This journey begins as each child develops a clear sense of self and belonging within their community. We actively welcome all members of the school to share their unique cultural backgrounds and personal experiences. As students gain confidence in who they are, they also grow in their appreciation of different cultures.

To honour and celebrate our diverse community, we organise cultural events throughout the year. Families are encouraged to get involved by reading stories, bringing traditional foods, or facilitating workshops and activities. The PYP promotes student independence by helping learners make connections between their school experiences and the wider world. This lays the groundwork for lifelong learning.

As both an educational framework and a guiding philosophy, the PYP is rooted in inquiry. It encourages students to ask questions, explore ideas and reflect on their learning - helping them understand the world around them.

Agency and Self Efficacy

In the PYP, learners are empowered to take ownership of their learning journey - to have agency. They demonstrate initiative, make informed choices, and take responsibility for both what they learn and how they approach it. Confident in their identity and abilities, students develop self-belief and learn collaboratively with and from others. This process fosters a sense of belonging and promotes respect for diverse perspectives, values and needs.



When students demonstrate agency, the dynamic between teacher and learner evolves into a collaborative partnership. Teachers who value student voice and believe in each learner's potential (self-efficacy) help cultivate this partnership. They engage students in the learning process by working alongside them , through small groups or one-on-one interactions - offering guidance, feedback and support.

Students demonstrate agency when they:

- take responsibility for their own learning
- make choices
- Share their thoughts and opinions
- ask questions and investigate
- explain and reflect on their learning
- generate new ideas
- actively participate in the learning community

How Teachers at ICS Milan Support Agency

At ICS Milan, we believe students learn best through active participation. Teachers provide opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning in meaningful ways, including:

- **Building a respectful classroom culture**
Students collaborate to create shared agreements about how to treat one another, ensuring the classroom feels inclusive, caring and safe.
- **Co-creating daily routines**
Students contribute to shaping routines, such as arrival times, transitions, or clean-up so they feel involved in the life of the classroom.
- **Designing learning environments**
Students help design learning spaces to support risk-taking and provide access to materials, enabling them to feel valued and supported.
- **Making learning decisions**
Teachers involve students to help decide what they learn, why it matters and how they will engage with it. This positions students as co-constructors of their learning.
- **Understanding expectations**
Teachers communicate clearly about what is being learned - content, concepts, skills and attitudes, and explain the purpose behind the learning.



The IB Learner Profile

The IB learner profile outlines ten essential attributes that IB World Schools consider vital for students. These qualities support learners in becoming compassionate, active members of their communities - locally and globally. At ICS Milan, the learner profile supports our vision to prepare each student to become a global citizen who can shape the world. These attributes shape both our teaching practices and our core values.



IB learner profile

The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognizing their common humanity and shared guardianship of the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world.

As IB learners we strive to be:

<p>INQUIRERS We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn with enthusiasm and sustain our love of learning throughout life.</p> <p>KNOWLEDGEABLE We develop and use conceptual understanding, exploring knowledge across a range of disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance.</p> <p>THINKERS We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyse and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions.</p> <p>COMMUNICATORS We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups.</p> <p>PRINCIPLED We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and justice, and with respect for the dignity and rights of people everywhere. We take responsibility for our actions and their consequences.</p>	<p>OPEN-MINDED We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from the experience.</p> <p>CARING We show empathy, compassion and respect. We have a commitment to service, and we act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world around us.</p> <p>RISK-TAKERS We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and innovative strategies. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change.</p> <p>BALANCED We understand the importance of balancing different aspects of our lives—intellectual, physical, and emotional—to achieve well-being for ourselves and others. We recognize our interdependence with other people and with the world in which we live.</p> <p>REFLECTIVE We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our learning and personal development.</p>
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The IB learner profile represents 10 attributes valued by IB World Schools. We believe these attributes, and others like them, can help individuals and groups become responsible members of local, national and global communities.

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Early Years (Preschool, Reception, Year 1)



At ICS Milan, we understand that young children learn in ways that are natural, unique - and deeply rooted in play, relationships and discovery. The PYP supports this through a learning environment tailored to early development - one that places wonder, agency and a sense of belonging at its core.

In the Early Years, learning is shaped by:

- Inquiry through play, where children explore by experimenting, creating, imagining and investigating
- Strong, supportive relationships between children, teachers and families that promote emotional safety and a strong sense of identity
- Environments that spark curiosity and encourage independent exploration
- A holistic approach where language, mathematics, the arts, and personal and social development are interwoven, rather than taught in isolation

Learning is planned around each child's readiness - not just age, but also interests, questions, and individual growth. Teachers and Learning Assistants carefully observe and document each child's learning, using these insights to design meaningful experiences and guide next steps.

In this environment, young learners build:

- Confidence and effective communication
- A strong sense of self and healthy relationships with others
- Thinking and problem-solving skills through hands-on discovery
- Foundational literacy and numeracy in real-life, meaningful contexts

Our Early Years team at ICS Milan creates a inclusive, caring and safe setting where children feel respected, capable, and connected - laying the groundwork for a lifelong love of learning.

A Transdisciplinary Curriculum Framework

The PYP is centred on transdisciplinary learning, which encourages students to explore concepts that go beyond individual subjects. This approach fosters meaningful, authentic learning through inquiry.

Learning is intended to be engaging, relevant, thought-provoking, and closely connected to real-life contexts. To support this type of learning, PYP schools are guided by the Programme Standards and Practices (PSP). These shared principles help maintain the quality and consistency of IB programmes across different contexts. The PYP curriculum framework and the PSP work hand in hand. While the framework outlines what students learn and how they learn it, the PSP supports schools in shaping an environment, culture and set of systems that promote learning effectively. Together, these elements help schools aim for high standards while adapting to the unique needs and goals of their communities.

The PYP recognises that children learn most effectively when they can relate new learning to what they already know. This process of connecting prior knowledge with new experiences helps students deepen their understanding over time.

Learning through the Transdisciplinary Themes

In the PYP, transdisciplinary themes are the starting point for learning. Each theme provides a meaningful context for students to explore big ideas, ask questions, and build understanding across different subjects.

These globally shared themes are used by all IB World Schools. They are designed to be relevant and engaging for learners no matter where they are or who they are. They prompt ongoing conversations between students, teachers and families about what it means to be human and how we live together in the world.

The transdisciplinary themes aim to:

- Support students in exploring commonalities across cultures and communities
- Highlight the interconnected, dynamic and evolving nature of life
- Encourage inquiry into real-world issues that are important to both children and adults
- Promote learning that naturally connects multiple subject areas
- Set the PYP apart from more traditional, subject-specific approaches

Together, these six themes form a rich and responsive framework that helps students grow into caring, capable, and reflective global citizens.

Transdisciplinary Themes

Transdisciplinary Themes	Description
Who we are	This theme invites students to explore what it means to be human. They inquire into identity, beliefs, values and well-being - across physical, mental, social and spiritual dimensions. It also includes relationships with others, the roles of family and community, and the factors that influence human behavior and responsibility.
Where we are in place and time	Students investigate their own and others' histories, examining how people live today and how our understanding of time and place has evolved. They explore human journeys, discoveries and migrations, and how these have shaped societies and civilizations on both local and global scales.
How we express ourselves	This theme centres on how people communicate and express ideas, emotions, beliefs and culture. Students explore creative expression through language, the arts, and movement and reflect on how creativity helps us understand ourselves and connect with others.
How the world works	Students explore the natural world and scientific principles, investigating how people interact with their environment and apply scientific knowledge. They consider how discoveries and technological advances influence our lives and the planet.
How we organise ourselves	This theme looks at the systems and structures people create to support communities. Students examine how organizations function, how decisions are made and how economies operate. They explore the roles individuals and groups play in shaping society and the environment.
Sharing the planet	Students inquire into how we coexist and manage Earth's limited resources. They explore issues of fairness, conflict, cooperation and sustainability, considering relationships within communities and ecosystems and the importance of equity, peace and shared responsibility.

Conceptual Understanding

In the PYP, learning is focused not just on recalling facts but on developing a deep understanding of key ideas that help students make sense of the world around them.

This approach is known as a concept-based curriculum. It encourages students to think critically, ask meaningful questions and draw connections between subject areas and real-life experiences.

When students engage with significant concepts, they are able to:

- Build on what they already know
- Develop new ideas through inquiry
- Connect knowledge across subjects to see the bigger picture
- Identify patterns and relationships
- Apply their understanding in new and unfamiliar contexts

This method helps students grow into adaptable, thoughtful learners who can tackle complex issues, communicate clearly and take informed action in the world.

Concepts

In the PYP, learning is structured around major ideas known as concepts. Concepts enable learners to develop deeper understanding rather than simply memorising isolated facts or skills.

Through concept-driven learning, students are supported to:

- Grasp the underlying ideas behind a topic
- Recognise how different areas of learning are linked
- Investigate meaningful issues in depth
- Reflect critically on challenging questions
- Make cross-disciplinary connections
- Apply their understanding in real-world situations

Concepts are typically framed around broad, thought-provoking words, e.g. form, function, change. These concepts serve as a foundation for inquiry, encouraging students to explore learning through various subjects, cultures, and perspectives.

Specified Concepts

The PYP identifies seven specified concepts that help structure student learning. These concepts guide transdisciplinary inquiries across subjects and deepen understanding within specific disciplines. Each concept is linked to a central question that prompts students to think more critically and explore ideas in depth.

Specified concepts	Key questions	Definition
Form	What is it like?	Everything has identifiable features that we can observe, describe, and classify.
Function	How does it work?	Everything serves a purpose. We explore how things behave or operate.
Causation	Why is it the way it is?	Events happen for a reason. We investigate causes and their effects.
Change	How is it changing?	Change is constant. It involves movement or transformation over time.
Connection	How is it related to other things?	Everything is interconnected. Ideas and actions often influence others.
Perspective	What are the different points of view?	People have different ways of seeing and understanding, shaped by their experiences.
Responsibility	What are our obligations?	We make decisions based on our values, and those choices have an impact.

HOW THESE CONCEPTS SUPPORT LEARNING

These specified concepts shape every unit of inquiry and help teachers plan meaningful learning experiences. Students are encouraged to explore them through open-ended questions that promote deep thinking and investigation.

When concepts are introduced through thoughtful questions, learning becomes more focused and intentional. Teachers and students can apply the questions flexibly, selecting the most relevant ones for the unit at hand with each unit of inquiry exploring several concepts at the same time.

Although the PYP includes seven specified concepts, schools expand on these by adding additional concepts that align with their learners' needs and the context of their community.

By working with these concepts, students are supported in developing critical thinking skills, curiosity, and a sense of global responsibility - helping them grow as reflective learners and responsible citizens.

Approaches to Learning (ATLs)

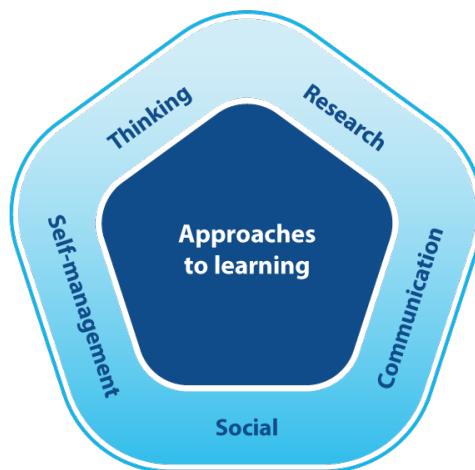
In the PYP, learning is not just about gaining knowledge - it's also about developing the skills needed to learn effectively. The Approaches to Learning (ATLs) are a set of interrelated skills that help students become confident, capable and thoughtful learners. These skills work hand-in-hand with the learner profile, concepts and inquiry-based learning to support deep and meaningful understanding.

The ATLs are based on the idea that knowing how to learn is just as important as what we learn. They help students to:

- Ask meaningful questions and think critically
- Set personal goals and reflect on their learning journey
- Stay curious and engaged
- Collaborate and communicate with others
- Take ownership of their learning and make informed choices

These skills empower students to take an active role in their education, fostering a sense of agency and independence.

While the ATL framework is used across all IB programmes, in the PYP it is tailored to suit the developmental needs of younger learners. Rather than being taught in isolation, these skills are woven into everyday classroom experiences and are visible across all areas of learning.



Approaches to Learning Skills Overview

While the Approaches to Learning are organized into five distinct categories, the skills within them are deeply interconnected. It's important for both students and educators to recognize that these skills often overlap and support one another. For instance, the ability to combine information from different sources and draw conclusions involves both thinking and research skills. Understanding these connections helps promote more integrated and meaningful learning experiences.

Category	Sub Skills
Thinking Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical thinking: analyzing, evaluating ideas and issues • Creative thinking: generating new ideas, seeing from different perspectives • Transfer: using what is learned in new situations • Reflection: thinking about how we learn and improve
Research Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information literacy: asking questions, gathering, organizing and evaluating data • Media literacy: using and creating information through media • Ethical use: understanding responsible and safe use of information
Communication Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchanging information: speaking, listening, interpreting • Literacy: reading and writing to gather and share ideas • Using digital tools to explore and express ideas
Social Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration: working well with others, managing conflict, supporting peers • Social-emotional intelligence: recognizing emotions, building relationships
Self-Management Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation: managing time, tasks, and materials • States of mind: perseverance, mindfulness, emotional regulation, resilience, motivation

Action: Learning that Leads to Doing

At ICS Milan, we believe that meaningful learning naturally leads to action. This action isn't something students are told to do - it grows from their own curiosity, care and sense of responsibility.

Action in the PYP takes many forms. It might be a student making a thoughtful choice, improving their own learning or well-being, helping others, or contributing to a more sustainable and peaceful world. Whether it's a small gesture or a larger initiative, what matters most is that the action is authentic and student-driven.

Students may take action by:

- Making choices that reflect respect and responsibility
- Setting personal goals or changing behaviors
- Supporting others in their community or beyond
- Engaging in projects that promote sustainability or social justice
- Teachers support and celebrate student action by creating space for reflection and encouraging students to connect their learning to real-life situations.

Every action, whether quiet or visible, is valued as part of the student's growth and agency.



Assessment in the PYP

At ICS Milan, assessment is an essential part of the learning process. In line with the IB philosophy, we use assessment not only to measure progress but to actively support and enhance student learning. Our practices are guided by the school's Assessment Policy and are designed to reflect the purpose and principles of the PYP.

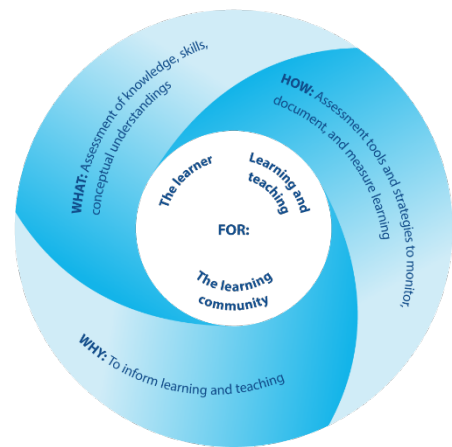
In the Primary Years Programme, assessment helps students deepen their understanding of key concepts, build knowledge and develop essential learning skills. It is a tool for reflection, growth and goal-setting - for both students and teachers. Assessment is not something done to students, but something done with them, as part of a collaborative learning journey.

We believe that all members of the learning community - students, teachers, and families - benefit from developing strong assessment capability: the ability to use assessment information to inform next steps, celebrate progress and support continued growth.

What Makes Assessment Meaningful?

Effective assessment in the PYP is:

- **Authentic:** It connects learning to real-life contexts, making it relevant and engaging for students.
- **Clear and purposeful:** Learning goals and success criteria are shared and understood, helping students know what they are working toward and how to get there.
- **Varied:** A range of tools and strategies are used to capture a full picture of student learning, including observations, conversations, self-assessments and performance tasks.
- **Growth-oriented:** The focus is on individual progress over time, rather than comparison with others.
- **Collaborative:** Teachers and students work together to plan, monitor, and reflect on learning.
- **Ongoing and interactive:** Assessment is a continuous process that includes regular dialogue about learning.
- **Feedback-driven:** Constructive feedback helps students understand what they've achieved and what they can do to improve. This 'feedback for learning' supports motivation and future success.



Assessment in the PYP is designed to empower students as active participants in their learning. It encourages them to take ownership, reflect on their progress and set meaningful goals. Through thoughtful assessment practices, we aim to nurture confident, capable and self-aware learners.

Assessment – Early Years

In the Early Years, assessment is ongoing, formative and closely linked to each child's developmental journey. Families can access their child's learning progress and next steps at any time through the Tapestry platform. Login credentials are provided at the start of the school year, and each child's profile remains active as they move from class to class. This continuity ensures that teachers have a clear view of each student growth and can plan responsively.

At the end of the school year, families receive a comprehensive report that reflects each child's development across the key areas of learning.

Assessment – Primary School

In the Primary Years, assessment is central to supporting student growth and helping learners develop a deeper understanding of themselves. It informs teaching, guides learning and provides meaningful feedback to students and their families.

A wide range of assessment strategies is used to ensure a balanced and holistic view of each student's progress. These include observations, anecdotal records, questioning, discussions, check-point assessments, presentations, self- and peer-assessments, and goal-setting conversations. These practices help students reflect on their learning, identify next steps, and take increasing ownership of their progress.

Documentation plays a key role in both Early Years and Primary. Platforms such as Tapestry and Toddle are used to build digital portfolios that capture learning over time and support reflection. These tools also foster communication between home and school, making learning visible and collaborative.

We view assessment as a shared process - one that involves students, teachers and families working together to understand and support each student's development. Through regular feedback and reflection, students are empowered to become more independent, motivated and self-aware in their learning journey.

Standardised Assessment in the Primary School

At ICS Milan, a range of standardised assessments are used to inform programme development and monitor student progress across cohorts. These assessments are designed for internal use and are not published as individual student results.

In English, students participate in the NGRT (New Group Reading Test), Progress Tests in English and Mathematics, and the PASS survey, which provides insight into student attitudes toward learning. In Italian, students complete the INVALSI assessments at the end of Year 3 and Year 6, in accordance with national requirements.

Additionally, the CAT4 (Cognitive Abilities Test) is administered either upon enrolment or during Year 5. This assessment provides a broad profile of student learning potential, and individual feedback is shared with families to support understanding and planning.

These tools help us build a comprehensive picture of student development and ensure that our curriculum remains responsive, inclusive and aligned with both IB and national standards.

Digital Portfolios

Digital portfolios at ICS Milan serve as a curated collection of student learning that reflects individual growth, effort and achievement over time. They document each student's journey, showcasing progress across a range of skills, understandings and dispositions.

Students are encouraged to take an active role in building their portfolios. As they move through the school, they begin to make thoughtful choices about which learning samples to include, reflecting on their development and setting goals for improvement. Teachers guide this process by helping students develop the skills needed to select meaningful work, articulate their reasoning and reflect on their learning.

Portfolios include a variety of evidence, from early explorations to polished final pieces, and highlight different aspects of learning, including skill development, social interactions and attitudes toward learning. The aim is to capture both the process and the product of learning, encouraging deeper thinking and ownership.

In the Early Years, teachers use Tapestry to document and share examples of learning and growth. As students transition into the Primary School and develop the necessary digital skills, they begin to take greater responsibility for curating their own portfolios using Toddle. These platforms support continuity, reflection and communication between home and school, making learning visible and meaningful.

Annual Reporting Calendar – Preschool and Reception

During the year there are 3 set times for individual parent/teacher meetings where the child's progress and next steps are discussed. These meetings are held at the end of October, February, and May. If there are any concerns about learning progress or wellbeing, it is always possible to arrange extra meetings with the class teacher and coordinator to discuss and ensure support as needed.

Annual Reporting Calendar – Year 1 to Year 6

October/ November	November	February	March	May	June
Online Parent Teacher Conference	Learning Progress Report I	Mid-Year Written Report	Three –Way Conference	Student – Led conference	End of Year Written Report

Parent Teacher Conferences

Parent - Teacher conferences provide parents with the opportunity to meet with members of their child's teaching team to discuss how their child is adjusting to the new school year and gain feedback on social emotional development as well as academic learning progress. As students move through the Primary School year the Parent -Teacher conference place more emphasis upon a range of academic assessment data that enables teachers to provide feedback on learning achievement and progress and guidance around the next learning steps. Each Parent Teacher Conference is focused upon providing information to assist families with supporting their child's ongoing growth and development.



LEARNING PROGRESS REPORTS

Learning Progress Reports are issued twice per year. The first progress report is centered around sharing feedback on a specific unit of learning and the second is focused on student self-reflection on skills and dispositions development. These Learning Progress Reports are connected to samples of learning and are an opportunity for students to develop their communication skills at home by talking through their learning and progress with family members.

WRITTEN REPORTS

Written reports are published twice a year and are available to be downloaded through our online School Management System, iSams. The written reports include detailed feedback on all areas of learning and growth and also include narrative feedback from teachers. Student learning is assessed and reported on

according to the indicators: Emerging, Developing, Applying, Extending. Please see the detailed reporting indicator information below.

THREE-WAY CONFERENCES

In the Spring Term, we hold Three-Way Conferences to support meaningful dialogue between students, teachers, and families. These are scheduled meetings according to a pre-registered time band, with the regular school timetable suspended for the day to allow families to attend with their child.

During the Three-Way Conference, students take an active role in discussing their learning progress, achievements, and areas for growth. Teachers facilitate the conversation, helping to guide reflection and identify next steps. This collaborative format encourages students to take ownership of their learning and builds a strong partnership between home and school.

Three-Way Conferences are an important opportunity for students to develop confidence in communicating about their learning, while families gain insight into their child's development and goals. Students set personal learning goals during their conference, which are then revisited and reflected upon during the Student-Led Conferences later in the school year, reinforcing continuity and growth in their learning journey.

STUDENT-LED CONFERENCES

In the Summer term, students participate in Student-Led Conferences, a celebration of their learning journey over the course of the year. There are no regular lessons on this day, and families are invited to attend during a scheduled time slot.

During the conference, students guide their families through a curated selection of work from their digital portfolios, reflecting on their growth, challenges, and accomplishments. They take full responsibility for presenting their learning, demonstrating skills and articulating how they have developed as learners.

In addition to the portfolio presentation, families are invited to visit other subject areas across the school and engage in classroom-based activities alongside their child. This provides a rich, hands-on experience that highlights the breadth and depth of student learning.

Student-Led Conferences promote student agency, deepen reflection and offer families an authentic and engaging window into their child's learning experience.

Parent Information Sessions and Curriculum Updates

The PYP approach may be unfamiliar to some families, which is why we believe it's essential to share both the philosophy behind the programme and how it is implemented in our classrooms.

To support this, we begin the school year with a 'Meet the Teacher' session in September. This event gives families the opportunity to hear about the year ahead, learn about year level plans and ask questions about the curriculum.

Throughout the year, we also host a series of parent workshops designed to deepen understanding of the PYP and how it supports student learning. We encourage parents to take part in these sessions and stay

connected by reading the weekly PYP blog, which is published on My ICS. Additionally, teachers share unit overview at the beginning of each new unit of inquiry to help families stay informed about what the children will be exploring in class.

Home Learning – Year 1 to Year 6 Guidelines

‘Our vision is to inspire, motivate, and challenge all students to achieve their personal best. Our mission is to provide them with a rich, creative, and well-balanced educational experience.’

As a learning community dedicated to the development of the whole child, we embrace the rights of our children to have opportunities for play, relaxation and to pursue their own interests outside of school. Our approach to home learning has been established to reflect our school community values and provide our students with developmentally appropriate learning experiences. We know all children need time to play, get curious and explore, and use their creativity in different ways. Our home learning activities aim to place emphasis on independence, curiosity, creativity and responsibility.

Research informs us that for Primary age students, the act of reading for pleasure daily has the most significant positive impact on overall student academic achievement and growth. Based on this research, emphasis is placed on developing positive daily reading habits at home whether that be in English, Italian or in the student’s home language.

Home Learning Developmental Overview

YEAR 1

- No home learning is assigned.
- Students take home readers to practice and reinforce their phonics and reading development.
- Reading is encouraged for at least 10 minutes per day.

YEAR 2 & 3

- Students in Year 2 – 3 are encouraged to read for pleasure every day and to sustain this for at least 15 minutes. Parental support with this is needed to offer shared reading time as well as encourage independent reading habits as children build confidence.
- Each Wednesday students and their families receive the Home Learning Announcement Published on Toddle. This provides students and their families with a summary of recent learning experiences, an overview of what is coming up and the home learning assignments for the week ahead in both English and Italian.
 - In English, one piece of home learning is assigned each week and should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete.

- In Italian, one piece of home learning is assigned each week and should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete.
- In Mathematics, students are asked to spend 20 minutes weekly on an assigned learning activity via Dreambox

YEAR 4 – 6

- Students in Year 4 – 6 are encouraged to read for pleasure every day and to sustain this for at least 20 – 30 minutes. This can be with a family member as well as independently.
- Each Wednesday students and their families receive the Home Learning Announcement published on Toddle. This provides students and their families with a summary of recent learning experiences, an overview of what is coming up and the home learning assignments for the week ahead in both English and Italian.
 - In English, one piece of home learning is assigned each week and should take no longer than 25 minutes to complete.
 - In Italian, one piece of home learning is assigned each week and should take no longer than 25 minutes to complete.
 - In Mathematics, students are asked to spend 30 minutes weekly on an assigned learning activity via Dreambox

Students share their Home learning assignments in class on Wednesdays and feedback is given on these in a variety of ways and teachers actively work to teach good learning habits and reflect on these with students.

If your child is struggling to manage Home Learning assignments within the given time frame please contact your child's teaching team.



Learning Support

At ICS Milan, we are committed to meeting the diverse learning needs of all students. Our approach to learning support is grounded in the belief that every child can thrive when provided with the right tools, strategies, and encouragement. We aim to empower students by helping them build confidence, strengthen essential skills, and engage meaningfully in all aspects of school life.

Our learning support specialists work closely with class teaching teams to design and tailor learning experiences to meet individual student needs. This collaborative approach ensures that support is integrated into the classroom environment and aligned with the PYP's inquiry-based philosophy.

For students with identified learning needs, a formalised Personal Development Plan (PDP) is developed and based on the goals set support may take several forms, including:

- Accommodations implemented within the classroom by the teaching team and supported by the Learning Support Teacher
- Targeted individual or small group sessions offering focused instruction designed to meet specific learning goals.
- In-class support with a 1:1 educator who works alongside the student during lessons to provide guidance and scaffolding.

- Students receiving ongoing support will have their progress monitored and communicated through regular written updates to families.

For students who demonstrate learning needs in a specific area of learning but do not have a specific diagnosed need, small group targeted learning sessions may be implemented to compliment the learning goals in the classroom. All learning support provision is reviewed regularly to ensure it is responsive and effective.

We believe that strong partnerships with families are essential. Learning support staff are always available to meet with parents to discuss concerns, share strategies and celebrate progress. When appropriate, we may recommend external assessments to gain deeper insight into a student's learning profile and to inform next steps in their educational journey.

Language at ICS Milan

LANGUAGE LEARNING

Language is central to how students learn, think and communicate. At ICS Milan, we view language as a transdisciplinary tool that supports inquiry and expression across all areas of the curriculum. While inquiry is the primary approach to language learning in the PYP, we also use a range of strategies to ensure students develop strong foundational skills.

All teachers are considered language teachers, regardless of subject area. They model effective language use and create opportunities for students to practise speaking, listening, reading and writing in authentic contexts. Literature plays a key role in enriching vocabulary, deepening comprehension and fostering a love of language.

Students are encouraged to use language in meaningful ways - whether to explore ideas, collaborate with peers or express their thinking. Our goal is to help learners become confident, fluent and accurate communicators across oral, written and visual forms.

We focus on three strands of language development:

- Oral Communication: Listening and speaking
- Written Communication: Reading and writing
- Visual Communication: Viewing and presenting



Scuola Paritaria

As a Scuola Paritaria, ICS Milan is recognised by the Italian Ministry of Education (MIUR) for meeting high standards of educational excellence. This status allows us to offer a rich and balanced curriculum that honours both Italian national requirements and the international framework of the IB Primary Years Programme (PYP).

In the PYP, we integrate the Curriculum Italiano with the IB's transdisciplinary, inquiry-based approach. This dual framework ensures that students receive a rigorous education in both English and Italian, while developing the skills and dispositions needed to thrive in a global context. Learning is organised around central ideas and concepts that connect subject areas and promote deep understanding across disciplines.

Our curriculum includes Italian language and literature, mathematics, science, social studies, English language arts, the arts, physical education and personal, social and health education. These subjects are taught through meaningful, student-centred inquiries that reflect both national standards and the IB's emphasis on international-mindedness and learner agency.

This integrated approach benefits all learners by providing a strong academic foundation while nurturing curiosity, creativity and critical thinking. Students are encouraged to explore real-world issues, take action in their communities, and develop the attributes of the IB Learner Profile.

Our teaching team consists of dedicated, experienced educators who use developmentally appropriate strategies to support language acquisition and conceptual understanding. Instruction is differentiated to meet the needs of diverse learners, and collaboration between Italian and homeroom teachers ensures coherence across the curriculum.

By combining the strengths of the Italian national system with the global perspective of the IB, the PYP at ICS Milan prepares students to become confident, capable and compassionate learners - ready to succeed in the next stages of their education and beyond.

Multilingual Language Learners (MLL)

At ICS Milan, we celebrate the rich linguistic and cultural diversity of our student body. Our Multilingual Language Learner (MLL) provision supports students who are developing proficiency in English or Italian as additional languages, ensuring they feel confident, included and empowered to participate fully in school life.

Whether students are learning English (EAL) or Italian (IAL), they receive targeted support tailored to their language development needs. MLL teachers work closely with Homeroom and Italian teachers to plan and implement instruction that is integrated into the Programme of Inquiry where possible and responsive to each learner's stage of development.

EAL provision is part of a paid EAL programme. When students join ICS Milan in Year 2 or above their level of English proficiency is assessed and based on this a level of EAL provision is determined. Dependent on needs, provision may be offered through individual or small group targeted learning lessons and/or in class provision. EAL teachers work closely with homeroom teachers to ensure learning is accessible and engaging for students.

IAL provision begins in Year 2 and IAL teachers may work alongside students within the classroom to scaffold learning in real-time, or through a small group learning model, where students work outside the fluent speakers classes to focus on specific language goals. These flexible approaches allow us to meet students where they are and ensure they receive the support they need in the most effective context.

Students are encouraged to draw on their home languages as valuable tools for learning. Instruction is differentiated and culturally responsive, using a variety of texts, media and strategies to support comprehension, expression and engagement. In the early stages of language acquisition, students may experience a 'silent period,' during which they are actively listening and observing before beginning to speak. This is a natural and respected part of the learning process.

Across the MLL provision, we view language learning as a journey. Mistakes are embraced as part of growth, and students are supported to take risks, reflect on their progress and celebrate their achievements as multilingual, internationally minded learners.

Home Languages

At ICS Milan, we value and embrace the diverse linguistic backgrounds of our community. We believe that maintaining and developing students' home languages is vital - not only during their English language acquisition journey but throughout their entire educational experience. Nurturing a student's home language supports their academic progress, social connections and emotional well-being.

Research highlights that a strong foundation in a child's home language enhances their ability to learn additional languages, boosts cognitive development and contributes to a strong sense of identity. In alignment with the PYP philosophy, we encourage all students to continue growing in their home languages alongside the languages used for academic instruction.

At ICS Milan, we actively promote home language development by:

- Partnering with families and home language educators
- Offering suitable spaces and resources for home language instruction
- Celebrating multilingualism as a key aspect of international-mindedness

Digital Learning in the PYP

In an increasingly connected and technology-rich world, digital tools play a vital role in how students think, communicate, create and collaborate. Within the PYP at ICS Milan, digital learning is embedded across the curriculum to support meaningful inquiry, foster learner agency, and prepare students to navigate and contribute to a digital society with confidence and integrity.

Technology is not treated as a standalone subject; rather, it is integrated into all areas of learning. Digital tools are used intentionally to enhance student engagement, deepen understanding and provide diverse ways for learners to express their ideas. Whether researching, designing, presenting or reflecting, students use technology to support and extend their thinking in ways that are relevant to their lives and the world around them.



Our Approach

Digital learning at ICS Milan is designed to be inclusive, purposeful, and future-focused. As students engage with emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, they are encouraged to think critically, act responsibly and participate actively in a global digital landscape. These experiences help build essential skills for life beyond the classroom, supporting students to become thoughtful, capable and principled contributors to their communities.

Transdisciplinary Digital Capabilities

Students develop a range of digital capabilities that are applied across the Programme of Inquiry and within subject-specific learning. These capabilities are designed to support both academic growth and responsible digital citizenship:

- Investigating: Students learn to inquire and research effectively by exploring a variety of digital sources, evaluating their reliability and making connections to real-world contexts.
- Creating: Learners use digital tools to generate original ideas, solve problems, and express their thinking creatively. Innovation, iteration and reflection are key components of this process.
- Communicating: Students share their ideas clearly and purposefully using different media and formats, making thoughtful choices about how to convey meaning to various audiences.
- Collaborating: Digital platforms support teamwork and co-construction of knowledge. Students learn to value diverse perspectives and contribute actively to group learning.
- Organising: Learners manage digital information and tools to support planning, problem-solving, and thinking across disciplines. They develop systems to structure their work efficiently.
- Becoming Responsible Digital Citizens: Students are guided to make ethical and informed choices online. They learn to protect their privacy respect others, and use technology safely, legally and with integrity.

Together, these capabilities ensure that digital learning at ICS Milan is not only integrated throughout the curriculum, but also aligned with our mission to develop internationally minded, future-ready students. By engaging with technology in thoughtful, ethical and creative ways, students are empowered to become active participants in their own learning and responsible contributors to an ever-evolving digital world.

STEAM Approach

At ICS Milan, we embrace a STEAM approach to learning - bringing together Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics to encourage creativity, innovation and problem-solving. STEAM is a valued part of our educational philosophy and is integrated through a variety of experiences across the school.

Students engage with STEAM through:

- Units of inquiry, where STEAM connections enrich transdisciplinary learning
- Hands-on investigations and experiments in science and design
- Creative arts projects that integrate technology or mathematical thinking
- House challenges that promote teamwork, design thinking and creative problem-solving
- CI Space - a regular scheduled time where students explore big ideas through collaborative projects

This approach helps students apply knowledge in meaningful ways, think critically across disciplines and develop the confidence to explore, create and innovate.

Developing Academic Integrity in the PYP

In the PYP, students begin building the foundations of academic integrity by developing the skills, attitudes and understandings that support honest and responsible learning. These include:

RESEARCH AND THINKING SKILLS

- Searching effectively using keywords
- Understanding the difference between primary and secondary sources
- Exploring multiple viewpoints and identifying bias
- Recognising the difference between facts and opinions
- Evaluating the reliability and accuracy of information

USING SOURCES RESPONSIBLY

- Highlighting, paraphrasing and summarising in their own words
- Acknowledging where ideas come from - whether from books, people, media, or other sources
- Understanding what plagiarism is and why it matters
- Creating simple bibliographies using agreed formats (e.g., title, author, date, publisher, and links when needed)

REFLECTION AND OWNERSHIP

- Considering how different sources influence their learning
- Taking pride in original thinking and personal effort
- Recognising academic integrity as a form of self-respect and respect for others

What We Model as Educators

Teachers play a key role in helping students understand and value academic integrity. We model:

- Respect for students' ideas and the contributions of others
- Openness to different perspectives
- Honesty and transparency in our own work
- Responsibility and self-management in learning
- Independent thinking and expression

Our Commitment

Our goal is to help students see academic integrity not just as a rule, but as a value that guides their learning journey. As they grow, we support them to:

- Take responsibility for being honest in their work
- Make thoughtful, ethical choices
- Feel confident and proud of their own learning

By developing these habits early, students are better prepared to become principled, capable and caring learners - both now and in the years ahead.

The Year 6 PYP Exhibition

At ICS Milan, the Year 6 Exhibition marks a significant milestone in a student's PYP journey. As the culminating experience of the programme, it provides students with an opportunity to demonstrate the depth of their learning, the skills they have developed and the attributes of the IB Learner Profile they have embodied throughout their time in the PYP.

The Exhibition is a student-led inquiry into a real-world issue or topic of personal significance. It encourages learners to take ownership of their learning, collaborate with peers, engage with the wider community, and reflect on their growth as internationally minded individuals. Through this process, students showcase their ability to think critically, communicate effectively and act responsibly.

This PYP Exhibition is not only a celebration of student achievement but also a powerful demonstration of the PYP in action. Families, staff, and members of the school community are invited to attend and support the students as they present their inquiries and share their learning journeys. We ask that at least one parent or carer be present for each Year 6 student, as their support plays a vital role in recognising and honouring this important educational experience.

ICS Milan Programme of Inquiry

At ICS Milan, the Programme of Inquiry is a dynamic and continuously evolving framework. It is regularly reviewed to ensure that learning experiences remain relevant, engaging, and responsive to the diverse needs and interests of our students. As part of this reflective process, the sequence, emphasis, or content of units may be adjusted throughout the academic year.

The example provided illustrates how the Programme of Inquiry is currently structured as we enter the 2025–26 school year. Please note that revisions may take place as teaching teams engage in collaborative planning and ongoing reflection throughout the year.

Families will be kept informed of any updates through our regular curriculum communications, which are shared prior to the launch of each new unit. These updates are intended to keep families connected to their child’s learning journey and the inquiries taking place.

The full version of the Programme of Inquiry is available to families on MY ICS.

Year Level	Who we are	Where we are in place and time	How we express ourselves	How the world works	How we organise ourselves	Sharing the planet
Pre School	Every day we learn about who we are and what we can do		People express their ideas and feelings in different ways		Some people help us and make us feel happy and safe.	We share our world with other living things.
Reception	We can explore who we are through our interests, ideas and our relationships.		We see and make patterns all around us.		Transport helps people get where they need to go.	All living things grow, change and depend on each other.
Year 1	Connecting with others helps us feel a sense of identity	Celebrations are a recognition of important events and people around the world.	Our senses help us to explore the world.	We discover the world by exploring the materials around us.		
Year 2	Lifestyle choices affect our health and well-being.	People, objects and memories connect us to the past	Storytelling develops an understanding of people and the world around us.	People use their understanding of forces to make things move.	Cooperation is essential to help us build a positive community.	Living things share their environment and depend on each other to survive.

Year 3	People grow and develop by recognising and building on their strengths and abilities.	Evidence of past civilisations can be used to make connections to present day society.	Expression is influenced by our experiences, culture, and identity.	Light and sound are natural phenomena that help us understand and interact with the world around us.	Systems help communities stay organised and meet people's needs.	The choices we make affect how we use and care for the Earth's resources.
Year 4	What we believe and value is part of who we are.	Exploration leads to new understandings and discoveries.	People use creative expression to share their ideas and stand up for what they believe in.	Energy can be transformed into different forms and used for a variety of purposes.	Communities organise events to express identity, culture.	Earth's changes affect how humans and living things adapt and interact with the environment.
Year 5	Body systems work together to keep our body and mind healthy.	Journeys and experiences of immigration shape identities and communities.	Inspiration develops the capacity to design and create.	The scientific process helps us understand materials and matter around us.	People create systems to produce and exchange goods and services to meet needs and wants.	Human behaviour can create, prevent or resolve conflict.
Year 6	Our identities are shaped by change, belonging and self-expression.	Innovation evolves over time to meet the changing needs and interests of people.	Play helps us express our creativity, connect with others and explore new ideas.	Curiosity leads to the understanding that Earth is part of an immense system called the universe.	Actions and decisions made by governing bodies could affect society.	The PYP Exhibition – student developed Central Idea

Sustainable Development Goals

At ICS Milan, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are thoughtfully embedded into our Programme of Inquiry (POI). These 17 global goals provide a meaningful framework for students to explore real-world issues, take action, and understand their role as global citizens.

Rather than being taught as a separate subject, the SDGs are integrated across transdisciplinary units, specialist subjects and everyday learning experiences. This approach helps students connect their inquiries to global challenges such as climate action, equity, health, education and sustainability.

Through engagement with the SDGs, students:

- Investigate global and local issues through inquiry
- Reflect on ethical decision-making and personal responsibility
- Collaborate on projects that promote sustainability and social justice
- Take informed action to make a positive impact in their communities and beyond

By connecting learning to the SDGs, students develop a deeper understanding of how their ideas and actions contribute to a more peaceful, equitable and sustainable world.



Learning Across Subjects: Strands and Descriptions

LANGUAGE

Language is central to all learning – it is not just a subject but the foundation through which students explore, express and understand the world around them. In the PYP, students learn to use language for communication, about language to understand its structure and function, and through language to deepen their thinking and inquiry.

We celebrate and support students' home languages, encouraging them to draw on all their linguistic resources to enrich learning and foster personal development.

What do we want students to know and be able to do?

Language learning in the PYP is organised into three interconnected strands, each encompassing both receptive (understanding) and expressive (sharing) skills. These strands are developed across all subjects and year levels:

Oral Language – Listening and Speaking

Oral communication is a key part of learning and interaction. Students use spoken language to express ideas, ask questions, collaborate with peers and reflect on their experiences. Listening and speaking are foundational to cognitive development and social connection.

We nurture learners by:

- Encouraging confident and purposeful speaking
- Promoting active and respectful listening
- Supporting the use of language in varied contexts and for diverse purposes

Students develop oral language through storytelling, discussions, presentations and role-play. These experiences help them build vocabulary, structure their thinking and engage meaningfully with others. We also recognise that students may go through a 'silent period' when adapting to new languages or environments. This is a natural and important phase in language acquisition.

VISUAL LANGUAGE – VIEWING AND PRESENTING

Students learn to interpret and create meaning through visual media such as images, signs, maps, posters, presentations, videos and digital tools. Visual communication includes both understanding and producing visual messages -and involves using media to convey ideas, information, values and emotions.

They learn to:

- Understand how visuals communicate messages and values
- Use multimedia to share ideas with different audiences
- Reflect on how visuals are shaped by culture and context

Students develop visual literacy by analysing images, videos, graphs and diagrams, and by creating visual texts such as posters, slideshows and digital presentations. These skills help them become critical viewers and creative communicators in a media-rich world.

Written Language – Reading and Writing

Reading

Reading opens doors to new perspectives, deepens understanding and supports inquiry across all areas of learning. Through reading, students develop empathy, curiosity and critical thinking.

We foster a love of reading by:

- Offering a wide range of engaging texts, both fiction and nonfiction
- Encouraging independent reading for both enjoyment and exploration
- Supporting comprehension and the development of thoughtful responses
- Valuing reading as a key part of becoming an inquirer and a lifelong learner

Students engage with a variety of genres including poetry, informational texts and narratives. They learn to apply strategies such as predicting, questioning, summarising and making connections to enhance their understanding and enjoyment of texts.

Writing

Writing is a powerful tool for communication, creativity and reflection. Students write to express ideas, tell stories, solve problems and share their thinking with others.

We support young writers by:

- Encouraging authentic voice and imaginative expression
- Prioritising meaning and clarity in communication
- Developing writing skills through consistent practice and constructive feedback

Students explore a range of written forms including narratives, reports, letters and journals. They learn to plan, draft, revise, edit and publish their work for different audiences and purposes. Over time, they refine their use of structure, grammar, spelling, punctuation and other conventions to enhance the effectiveness and accuracy of their writing.

A Balanced and Inclusive Approach to Language Learning

Every child's language journey is unique. At ICS Milan, we strive to create a language programme that is both balanced and inclusive by:

- Offering opportunities for students to both understand and express ideas
- Supporting students at various stages of language development
- Valuing and promoting multilingualism as part of each student's identity and our commitment to international mindedness

- Embedding language learning meaningfully across all areas of the curriculum through inquiry-based experiences

Language empowers students to think deeply, reflect meaningfully, take action and build connections - both within the classroom and beyond.

MATHEMATICS

Mathematics empowers students to interpret and engage with the world around them. It nurtures logical reasoning, problem-solving and informed decision-making in everyday contexts. Within the PYP framework, mathematics extends beyond numbers -it involves recognising patterns, solving authentic problems and investigating shapes, data, and measurement in relevant and purposeful ways.

Mathematics is both a form of communication and a way of thinking. It enables students to explore, express and represent ideas with clarity and precision. Rather than focusing on rote memorisation, students develop deep conceptual understanding and versatile skills that can be applied across disciplines and in real-life situations.

How Mathematics Is Structured

Mathematics learning is organized into five interconnected strands, which are explored through inquiry, hands-on activities and reflection:

- Number
- Pattern and Function
- Measurement
- Shape and Space
- Data Handling

These strands provide a framework for students to investigate mathematical concepts and build both competence and confidence in their understanding.

Key Understandings Across the Strands

Number

Students investigate how numbers work and how they can be used to describe and compare quantities. They apply operations such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division to solve problems and make informed choices.

Pattern and Function

By recognising and analysing patterns, students begin to understand how mathematics helps explain the world. They explore relationships and repeating elements, laying the groundwork for algebraic thinking.

Measurement

Students develop an understanding of how to measure and compare quantities using appropriate units. They consider the accuracy of measurements and how to interpret values that fall between whole numbers.

Shape and Space

Students explore the properties of two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes. They learn how shapes relate to their surroundings and how space can be described, navigated and represented.

Data Handling

Students learn to gather, organise and present data in ways that reveal patterns and trends. They also explore concepts of probability using everyday language and numerical scales.

SCIENCE

Science encourages students to explore the natural and physical world through curiosity, observation and inquiry. It helps them develop a sense of wonder, ask meaningful questions and seek evidence-based explanations. In the PYP, science is not just about learning facts - it's about thinking critically, investigating phenomena and making connections between scientific ideas and everyday life.

Through hands-on experiences and collaborative exploration, students build scientific understanding that is conceptual, transferable and relevant. They learn to observe carefully, collect and interpret data, and communicate their findings clearly. Science learning in the PYP supports students in becoming thoughtful, informed and responsible global citizens.

How Science Learning Is Organised

The PYP science curriculum organises learning into three interconnected strands:

- Living Things
- Earth and Space
- Physical and Chemical Sciences

Each strand supports students in developing scientific thinking and understanding through inquiry, experimentation and reflection.

Strand Overviews

Living Things

Students explore the diversity, systems and interactions of living organisms. They investigate life cycles, habitats, and the ways living things adapt and respond to their environments. This strand encourages students to consider the impact of human activity on ecosystems and the importance of sustainability.

Earth and Space

Learners examine the features and processes of Earth and its place in the universe. They explore topics such as weather, climate, natural resources and celestial movements. This strand helps students understand the dynamic nature of our planet and the broader systems it is part of.

Physical and Chemical Sciences

Students investigate the properties and behaviors of matter and energy. They explore forces, motion, states of matter and chemical changes through hands-on experiments and inquiry. This strand supports students in developing foundational knowledge of physical principles and how they apply to real-world situations.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Social studies explores how people live, interact and shape their communities - across time, place and cultures. It invites students to examine the past, understand the present and imagine the future, while developing global awareness, critical thinking and a sense of responsibility.

In the PYP, social studies encourages students to investigate human behaviour, cultural systems and the relationship between people and their environments. Through inquiry and exploration, students develop an understanding of identity, diversity and change. They learn to ask thoughtful questions, consider multiple perspectives and make connections between local and global contexts. Social studies supports students in becoming informed, compassionate and active participants in their world.

How Social Studies Learning is Organised

The Social Studies curriculum is structured around four key strands:

- Ways of Knowing and Systems
- Critical Global Citizenship and Culture
- Continuity and Change for Reimagined Futures
- Interconnected Places, Spaces and Relationships

These strands guide students in exploring how knowledge is constructed, how people relate to one another and their environments, and how societies evolve and imagine future possibilities.

Strand Overviews

Ways of Knowing

Students explore diverse ways of understanding the world, including local and global perspectives. They investigate how systems such as laws, policies, and livelihoods shape decision-making, and how knowledge is developed through experience, research and interaction with natural environments.

Critical Global Citizenship and Culture

Students examine relationships, identity and culture within communities. They explore how race, gender and societal norms intersect, and how people confront inequities. This strand encourages reflection on rights, belonging and compassionate engagement with social, cultural, historical and ecological contexts.

Continuity and Change for Reimagined Futures

Students investigate how people and societies change over time, and how the past influences the present and future. They reflect on adaptation, innovation, resilience and the power of imagination in shaping shared futures, considering intergenerational experiences and responsibilities.

Interconnected Places, Spaces and Relationships

Students explore how people connect to places and spaces and how these relationships evolve. They reflect on belonging, attachment and the significance of land and environment, recognising the deep interdependence between people and the living world.

ARTS

The arts are a vital part of learning in the PYP, offering students opportunities for personal expression, cultural understanding and creative exploration. Through the arts, students engage with ideas, emotions and perspectives in ways that support their emotional, cognitive and social development.

How Arts Learning is Organised

The Arts curriculum is organised around two concept-driven strands:

- Creating
- Responding

These strands guide students in developing artistic skills, exploring big ideas and engaging thoughtfully with the arts.

Strand Overviews

Creating

Students explore materials, techniques and ideas to express themselves through the arts. They take creative risks, solve problems and reflect on the process of making and performing. This strand encourages innovation, imagination and purposeful artistic choices.

Responding

Students learn to interpret, reflect on and respond to artistic works. They consider how the arts communicate meaning across cultures, time periods and social contexts. This strand supports students in developing aesthetic awareness and critical thinking.

In the PYP, students experience a rich and varied arts curriculum, with the two strands applying across four distinct disciplines:

- Visual Arts
- Music
- Drama
- Dance

These disciplines are explored both independently and through transdisciplinary learning, helping students make meaningful connections across subjects and with the world around them. Arts education nurtures imagination, encourages risk-taking, and fosters appreciation for diverse forms of expression. It supports students in developing confidence, collaboration, and a deeper understanding of themselves and others.

ARTS DISCIPLINES

Visual Art

Students engage with a range of media and techniques, e.g. drawing, painting, sculpture and mixed media, to explore visual storytelling, symbolism and design. They learn to express ideas visually and reflect on the role of art in society and culture.

Music

Students explore rhythm, melody, harmony and sound through singing, playing instruments, composing and listening. Music supports emotional expression, cultural appreciation and collaborative performance.

Drama

Students use movement, voice, and improvisation to explore characters, situations and themes. Drama encourages empathy, communication and creative risk-taking, helping students understand perspectives and emotions.

Dance

Students express themselves through movement, exploring rhythm, space and cultural forms of dance. Dance promotes physical awareness, storytelling through motion and appreciation of diverse traditions and styles.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION (PSPE)

PSPE supports students in developing a strong sense of self, building positive relationships and understanding the importance of physical health and well-being. It is taught through two interconnected subject areas:

- Personal and Social Education (PSE)
- Physical Education (PE)

Together, these areas help students explore who they are, how they relate to others, and how they care for their bodies and minds. Learning is organised around four concept-driven strands that span both PSE and PE.

PSPE Strands

Identity

Students explore who they are as individuals, including their values, beliefs, emotions and experiences. They reflect on their strengths and limitations, cultural heritage and how they grow and change over time. This strand supports the development of self-worth and resilience.

Interactions

Students investigate how people relate to one another in different contexts, such as family, school and community. They develop collaboration skills, understand roles and responsibilities, and learn to navigate social dynamics with empathy and respect.

Wellness

Students build knowledge and habits that contribute to a balanced and healthy lifestyle. They explore nutrition, sleep, mental health and the mind-body connection, learning how to make informed choices that support overall well-being.

Movement

Learners engage in physical activity to develop fitness, coordination, and motor skills. They explore the importance of regular movement for health and build confidence in their physical abilities through games, sports and active play.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION (PE)

Physical Education in the PYP supports students in developing physical competence, confidence and a lifelong appreciation for health and movement. It goes beyond physical skills to nurture social-emotional growth, teamwork and personal responsibility. PE provides opportunities for students to explore how movement contributes to well-being, self-expression and connection with others.

Learning in PE is guided by the same four strands that shape Personal, Social, and Physical Education (PSPE):

- Identity - building confidence and self-awareness through physical challenges
- Interactions - developing cooperation, communication, and fair play
- Wellness - understanding how lifestyle choices affect physical and mental health
- Movement - refining motor skills, coordination, and physical literacy

Through a wide range of activities, students learn to set goals, take risks and reflect on their progress. They also explore how physical activity supports emotional regulation, resilience, and a sense of belonging.

Types of Experiences in Physical Education

Our PE curriculum includes a variety of learning experiences that support both physical competence and social-emotional growth:

Individual Pursuits

Activities such as athletics, swimming, and personal fitness that focus on motor skill development, goal-setting and personal achievement.

Movement Composition

Creative movement experiences including dance and gymnastics that allow students to express emotion, rhythm and storytelling through physical form.

Games

Team-based and strategy-focused activities that build cooperation, communication and understanding of rules and fair play.

Adventure Challenges

Collaborative problem-solving tasks that require teamwork, resilience and critical thinking in dynamic group settings.

Health Related Fitness

Experiences that help students understand how to maintain a healthy body through exercise, nutrition and lifestyle choices.

Physical Education empowers students to make healthy choices, take action for well-being and develop confidence in their physical abilities - now and in the future.

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL EDUCATION (PSE)

Personal and Social Education (PSE) is an essential part of the PYP learning experience. Rather than being taught as a standalone subject, it is thoughtfully integrated across all areas of the curriculum - from inquiry units to the arts, science and physical education.

PSE supports students in developing a strong sense of identity, emotional well-being and positive relationships. It helps them explore who they are, how they relate to others and how they care for themselves and their environment. Through reflection, empathy, resilience and responsible decision-making, students grow into confident, compassionate, and thoughtful individuals.

Learning in PSE is guided by the four PSPE strands:

- Identity - developing self-awareness, values, and emotional understanding
- Interactions - building respectful relationships and social responsibility
- Wellness - fostering healthy habits and emotional regulation
- Movement - exploring physical activity as a tool for well-being and expression

These strands are embedded across the curriculum and daily school life, supporting students in becoming balanced and caring members of their communities.

Personal and Social Learning in Action

Throughout the curriculum students are given opportunities to:

- Reflect on their personal, social and physical well-being
- Develop strategies to manage change, emotions and challenges
- Set personal goals and work toward them with persistence
- Strengthen individual and group skills through collaboration
- Practice respectful and cooperative behaviours in teams and communities
- Understand the elements of a healthy lifestyle
- Recognise their connection to others and their impact on the environment

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is the PYP?

The PYP is a globally recognised framework for primary education that emphasises inquiry, international-mindedness and holistic development. It encourages students to explore concepts across subjects, build essential skills and grow as thoughtful, active learners.

What does 'inquiry-based learning' mean?

Inquiry means students learn by asking questions, exploring ideas and making connections. It is an active, student-centered approach that builds curiosity and understanding.

How are units of inquiry planned and taught?

Units of inquiry are built around central ideas and lines of inquiry that guide exploration across subjects. Teachers collaborate to design learning experiences that connect concepts from areas like science, social studies and the arts. Students investigate big ideas through hands-on activities, discussions and reflection - making learning meaningful and connected.

Do students still learn reading, writing and mathematics?

Absolutely. Literacy and numeracy are essential and taught both directly and through meaningful, real-world contexts.

What role do specialist subjects play in the PYP?

Specialist subjects such as art and design, music and PE are an important part of the PYP. They often support and extend the learning happening in units of inquiry. For example, a unit about communities might include music from different cultures or art inspired by local landmarks. These subjects help students explore ideas creatively and from multiple perspectives.

How are students assessed in the PYP?

Assessment focuses on growth. Teachers observe learning, give feedback and help students reflect. Students also set goals and assess their own progress.

How is student agency supported in the PYP?

Student agency means children have a voice in their learning. In the PYP, students are encouraged to make choices, ask questions and take ownership of their learning journey. They set goals, reflect on their progress and sometimes even help shape the direction of a unit. This builds confidence, independence and a sense of responsibility.

What kind of professional development do PYP teachers receive?

PYP teachers participate in ongoing IB training and collaborative planning to ensure high-quality learning experiences. They stay up to date with best practices in inquiry-based teaching, assessment and curriculum design. This professional growth helps teachers create engaging, consistent and effective learning environments for all students.

How can parents support learning at home?

Stay curious together! Ask questions, read and explore ideas, and talk about what your child is learning. Showing interest helps children feel confident and engaged.

Explore more: IB PYP Resources for Parents

For families who would like to learn more about the Primary Years Programme and how to support their child's learning journey, the International Baccalaureate offers a range of helpful resources.

We've curated a selection of links that explain the philosophy and practices of the PYP, including how children learn through inquiry, the role of the learner profile and ways parents can support learning at home.

Whether you're new to the PYP or looking to deepen your understanding, these resources are a great place to start:

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE PYP

- [PYP Parent Pack – FAQs about the PYP \(PDF\)](#)
A clear and accessible guide that explains the PYP framework, transdisciplinary themes, learner profile, and how the programme supports holistic development.
- [Official IB PYP Programme Page](#)
A comprehensive overview of the PYP, including its philosophy, curriculum structure, and benefits.

INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING AND LEARNING AT HOME:

- [Learning at Home: Resources for PYP Parents and Caregivers](#)
Offers practical ideas and templates for supporting inquiry-based learning at home, including early years play and the PYP exhibition.
- [Inquiry Through Play – Supporting PYP Parents \(PDF\)](#)
A short guide for parents of younger learners on how to support learning through play.

LEARNER PROFILE AND PERSONAL INQUIRIES

- [The Learner in the PYP](#)
Explains the IB learner profile and how it supports international-mindedness and personal growth.
- [Parent Guide to Personal Inquiries in the PYP \(PDF\)](#)
A practical resource for helping children pursue their own interests and develop agency through inquiry.

Glossary of IB PYP Key Terms

Academic Integrity

Being honest and responsible in learning - this includes giving credit for others' ideas, avoiding plagiarism and taking ownership of one's work.

Action

What students do as a result of their learning. This might be helping others, making thoughtful choices, changing behaviour or creating something meaningful.

Agency

Students have voice, choice and ownership in their learning. They set goals, reflect on progress and make decisions about how they learn best.

Approaches to Learning (ATLs)

Five skill areas that help students learn effectively: thinking, research, communication, social and self-management.

Assessment Capability

A student's ability to understand what they're learning, how well they're doing, and what steps they can take to improve.

Central Idea

A big concept that guides each unit of inquiry and helps students connect learning across subjects.

Concepts

Broad, transferable ideas that help students understand the world. The PYP focuses on seven specified concepts: form, function, causation, change, connection, perspective, and responsibility.

Conceptual Understanding

Deep learning built through exploring big ideas that apply across subjects and contexts.

Essential Agreements

Shared expectations created by students and teachers to support a positive learning environment and respectful community.

Exhibition

A major student-led inquiry in the final year of the PYP. Students explore a topic they care about, take action, and present their learning to the school community.

Formative Assessment

Ongoing feedback during learning that helps students grow and guides teaching.

Inquiry

Learning through curiosity - students ask questions, explore ideas and reflect on what they discover.

International-Mindedness

Being open to different cultures and perspectives and acting to make a positive difference in the world.

Learner Profile

Ten attributes that support students in becoming thoughtful, responsible global citizens -such as being caring, principled, open-minded and reflective.

Lines of Inquiry

Specific questions or ideas that help students explore the central idea in each unit.

Pedagogical Leadership

Leadership focused on teaching and learning - ensuring that the curriculum is well-planned, inclusive and aligned with IB principles.⁷

Programme of Inquiry (POI)

An overview of all units of inquiry across year levels, showing how big themes are explored over time.

Provocation

An experience or resource used to spark curiosity and encourage students to begin asking questions at the start of a unit.

Reflection

Thinking carefully about what was learned, how it was learned and what could be improved.

Specialist Subjects

Subjects like art, music and PE that support and enrich inquiry-based learning.

Student Agency

Students take an active role in their learning by making choices, setting goals and leading aspects of their learning journey.

Student-Led Conferences

Meetings where students share their learning and progress with families, often using portfolios or journals.

Summative Assessment

Assessment at the end of a unit or learning period to evaluate understanding of key concepts and skills.

Transdisciplinary Learning

Learning that connects different subjects through big ideas and real-world contexts, helping students see learning as meaningful and interconnected.

Transdisciplinary Themes

Six broad themes used in the PYP to explore real-life topics across subjects, such as 'Who We Are' and 'How the World Works.'